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Message from the Editor

Greetings to our colleagues from all parts of the world. As the editor of Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research (JAQMER), I would like to welcome you to Volume 4, Issue 1.

This edition contains an editorial essay and three articles on qualitative research that we believe will assist you, the reader, in conceptualizing and solving problems related to developing research or a manuscript with a qualitative design.

The current issue includes an editorial essay and three articles: the editorial essay, which is called 'Experimental action research as the preferred methodology in social, behavioral, health and human sciences' is an essay. In this editorial on experimental action research, the author tried to explain that experimental action research is more suitable than randomized controlled experimental research for social sciences, nursing, midwifery practice, behavioral, health and humanities, by defining it based on the literature and his own research experiences, with examples.

The first article, which is called 'Challenges faced by school administrators in school management' is a qualitative study with descriptive phenomenological design. The aim of this study was to examine the challenges school administrators faced in their communication with teachers and the solutions they found to these challenges.

The second article, which is called 'Education problems faced by parents of international students in Turkey', is a qualitative study with descriptive phenomenological design. aimed to identify the problems parents of foreign citizens in Turkey faced when receiving general education and to provide suggestions for their solution.

The third article, which is called 'An autoethnographic case for social entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism', is a qualitative study with an autoethnographic design. The author autoethnographically describes, discusses, and reflects on the process of becoming a professional in tourism based on her social entrepreneurial journey by revealing what challenges and opportunities she faces in meeting the criteria for sustainable tourism and what is considered sustainable by local people, operators, and public institutions.

These articles are designed to offer thoughts, insight, suggestions, samples and ideas on qualitative research. According to the guidance and the results of articles in this issue, researchers could shape their future qualitative research.

We hope you enjoy the articles in this volume 4 issue 1 of the journal and find them informative and useful for designing and developing qualitative research. Please remember that articles published in JAQMER do not reflect the position of the journal's editorial staff, reviewers.

Dr. İlhan Gunbayi
JAQMER Editor



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Editorial

Experimental action research as the preferred methodology in social, behavioral, health and human sciences

Ilhan Gunbayi*

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Abstract. This editorial argues that experimental action research is more suitable than randomized controlled experimental research for social sciences, nursing, midwifery practice, behavioral, health and humanities. Drawing upon philosophical and methodological perspectives from Guba (1981), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Habermas (1987), Gunbayi and Sorm (2018), Whitehead and Schneider (2013), and Gunbayi (2020a, b), this article critiques the positivist paradigm underlying randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and advocates for action research as a more contextually relevant, participatory, and ethically sound approach. The discussion is grounded in an analysis of mixed methods research, social paradigms, and knowledge-constitutive interests, supporting the claim that experimental action research better aligns with the complexities of human-centric disciplines.

Keywords: Action research, randomized controlled trials, social, behavioral, health and human sciences

Introduction

Research methodologies shape the way knowledge is produced and understood within various disciplines. The dominant positivist approach, as seen in RCTs, emphasizes objectivity, control, and generalizability (Cohen, Mannion, & Morrison, 2018). However, such methods may fail to capture the complexity of human behavior and social interactions, particularly in fields like social sciences, nursing, midwifery, and humanities. In contrast, experimental action research, rooted in constructivist and interpretive paradigms, facilitates practical problem-solving and participatory engagement (Gunbayi, 2020a).

Experimental action research has emerged as a preferred methodology in social, behavioral, health, and human sciences due to its ability to bridge theory and practice while fostering participatory engagement. Rooted in the work of Lewin (1946), action research is a cyclical and iterative approach that integrates experimentation with problem-solving in real-world settings. Unlike traditional experimental research, which often isolates variables in controlled environments, experimental action research emphasizes collaboration with stakeholders to co-develop and implement interventions that address complex social and health challenges (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

In the behavioral sciences, action research has been instrumental in designing interventions that promote behavior change and social transformation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Similarly, in health sciences, this methodology has been widely adopted to improve patient outcomes and healthcare delivery through participatory and iterative strategies (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). Given its adaptability and

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emphasis on contextual relevance, experimental action research aligns with the growing recognition that scientific inquiry must be both rigorous and responsive to societal needs.

This article explores the significance of experimental action research as a preferred methodology in these fields, examining its epistemological foundations, methodological principles, and practical applications. Through a review of key studies and theoretical perspectives, I highlight the strengths and limitations of this approach while discussing its implications for future research and practice.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative descriptive analysis based on a literature review, which represents a variation of the systematic review methodology. A literature review, based on interpretive paradigm, is generally defined as a systematic approach to identifying, collecting, and synthesizing existing research (Gunbayi, 2020b; Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Cooper, 1998). Thus, the aim of this article is to explore the limitations of RCTs and presents a compelling case for adopting experimental action research as the preferred methodology based on sub-titles:

1. Positivism vs. interpretivism: theoretical underpinnings,
2. Social paradigms and research design,
3. Experimental action research in mixed methods approaches,
4. Limitations of randomized controlled trials and the practical,
5. Ethical advantages of action research.

Findings

Based on literature review on experimental action research as the preferred methodology in social, behavioral, health and human sciences, this section covers positivism vs. interpretivism: theoretical underpinnings, social paradigms and research design, experimental action research in mixed methods approaches, limitations of randomized controlled trials and the practical and ethical advantages of action research.

Positivism vs. interpretivism: Theoretical underpinnings

Lincoln and Guba (1985) critique positivism for its dehumanizing approach to research, treating individuals as "subjects" rather than active participants. They argue that anti-positivist methodologies, such as action research, recognize the interactive and humanistic aspects of inquiry. Similarly, Habermas (1987) distinguishes between technical, practical, and emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interests, contending that positivist methods prioritize technical control at the expense of practical and emancipatory insights crucial in social sciences and healthcare research.

The debate between positivism and interpretivism is central to philosophical discussions on research paradigms in the social sciences, healthcare, and humanities. Positivism, grounded in empirical observation and quantification, seeks objective truths, whereas interpretivism emphasizes subjective meaning and human experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The contrast between these paradigms is particularly significant in fields like social research and healthcare, where human interactions and contextual complexities challenge purely empirical approaches (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Habermas, 1987).

Positivism is rooted in scientific realism and empiricism, originating from the works of Auguste Comte ([1848] 2009), who argued that scientific methods should be applied to social phenomena just as they are in the natural sciences. According to positivism, knowledge is best obtained through observable facts, controlled experiments, and statistical analyses (Bryman, 2016).

Key Assumptions of Positivism can be summarized as below:

- Objectivity and generalizability: Research should be independent of the researcher's bias, aiming to uncover universal laws.
- Causality and deductive reasoning: Causal relationships can be established through structured methods, such as randomized controlled trials (RCTs).
- Quantitative methods: Surveys, experiments, and standardized measurements are favored for producing reliable and replicable results (Cartwright, 2011; Cohen et al, 2018; Durkheim, [1895] 1982).

However, critics argue that positivism reduces human experiences to mere variables, overlooking the contextual, social, and cultural dimensions of behavior (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Particularly in fields like healthcare and education, positivist methodologies fail to account for patient perspectives, cultural influences, and ethical considerations (Greenhalgh, Howick & Maskrey, 2014).

Interpretivism emerged as a critique of positivist reductionism, emphasizing the subjective and socially constructed nature of reality. Interpretivists argue that human behavior is shaped by meanings, beliefs, and social contexts, which cannot be fully understood through rigid, objective methods (Weber, 1949). Key Assumptions of interpretivism can be summarized as below:

- Reality as socially constructed: Knowledge is shaped by individual and cultural interpretations, rather than universal laws.
- Understanding over prediction: The goal of research is to understand experiences rather than merely predict behaviors.
- Qualitative methods: Methods such as ethnography, phenomenology, and case studies are essential for capturing human experiences in depth (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Interpretivism aligns with critical and emancipatory paradigms, such as action research, emancipatory and participatory research, which aim to empower individuals and communities (Freire, 1972). Scholars such as Habermas (1987) emphasize that social inquiry should serve emancipatory interests, allowing individuals to challenge power structures rather than simply being subjects of study.

Jurgen Habermas (1987) presents a tripartite model of knowledge, arguing that positivism is limited to technical control, while human inquiry also requires practical and emancipatory interests:

- Technical interest (Positivist or Post-positivist): Focuses on prediction and control, using empirical data and structured methodologies (e.g., medical RCTs).
- Practical interest (Interpretivist): Emphasizes understanding social interactions, using qualitative approaches such as case, phenomenology and ethnography (e.g., patient narratives in healthcare research).
- Emancipatory interest (Critical Theory): Seeks to challenge oppression and promote social transformation (e.g., emancipatory or participatory action research in marginalized communities).

Habermas' critique of positivism argues that research should not only describe or explain but also empower individuals and challenge social inequalities (Gunbayi, 2020b; Habermas, 1987).

The positivism vs. interpretivism debate continues to influence mixed methods research, where scholars integrate quantitative rigor with qualitative depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). In healthcare and social policy, for example, evidence-based medicine relies on positivist principles, while patient-centered approaches align with interpretivist perspectives (Greenhalgh et al., 2014).

Despite their differences, some researchers advocate for pragmatism, arguing that combining positivist and interpretivist methods allows for a more holistic understanding of complex issues (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Social paradigms and research design

Gunbayi and Sorm (2018) outline four paradigms guiding social research: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. While RCTs align with radical structuralist and functionalist paradigms, which emphasizes predictability and control, action research is more compatible with the interpretive and radical humanist paradigms that prioritize meaning-making, contextual understanding, and social transformation. Action research's participatory nature empowers practitioners and stakeholders, fostering ethical and context-sensitive knowledge production (Gunbayi, 2020a).

Research in social sciences and healthcare is guided by distinct paradigms that shape epistemological and methodological choices. Gunbayi and Sorm (2018) classify social research paradigms into four categories:

1. *Functionalist Paradigm* – focuses on stability, predictability, and generalizable knowledge.
2. *Interpretive Paradigm* – seeks to understand meanings and human interactions in specific contexts.
3. *Radical Humanist Paradigm* – emphasizes subjectivity, empowerment, and social transformation.
4. *Radical Structuralist Paradigm* – focuses on the examination of structural relationships within the objective social world and assumes that social change will occur with revolutionary and rapid changes.

Within this framework, randomized controlled trials (RCTs) align with the radical structuralist and functionalist paradigm, emphasizing objectivity, causality, and control, whereas action research fits within the interpretive and radical humanist paradigms, prioritizing contextual understanding, participation, and social change (Gunbayi, 2020a).

RCTs are widely regarded as the gold standard for testing interventions in medical and psychological research (Cartwright, 2011). Rooted in positivism, they are designed to establish causal relationships through controlled experiments and statistical analyses (Cohen et al, 2018).

Key Features of RCTs within the radical structuralist and the functionalist paradigm can be summarized as follows:

- *Objectivity and generalizability:* RCTs seek to generate universal laws by minimizing bias and subjectivity.
- *Causal Determination:* Using randomization and control groups, RCTs attempt to isolate cause-and-effect relationships.
- *Standardization and Replicability:* Interventions are standardized to ensure that findings can be replicated across different populations.
- *Prediction and Control:* By adhering to fixed protocols, RCTs support evidence-based decision-making in healthcare and policy (Bonell et al., 2012; Bryman, 2016; Cartwright, 2011; Greenhalgh et al., 2014).

Unlike RCTs, action research (AR) is an iterative, emancipatory or participatory approach that focuses on understanding and improving real-world practices (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Rooted in

interpretivism and critical theory, AR engages participants as co-researchers, fostering context-sensitive and transformative knowledge production (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Key Features of action research within the interpretive and radical humanist paradigms can be summarized as follows:

- *Contextual understanding:* AR emphasizes situated knowledge rather than universal laws.
- *Participant involvement:* Practitioners and stakeholders actively shape the research process, making it more ethically sound and socially relevant.
- *Flexibility and reflexivity:* Unlike RCTs, AR allows for adaptation and iteration based on emerging insights.
- *Empowerment and social transformation:* Aligned with the radical humanist paradigm, AR seeks to empower marginalized voices and drive social change (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Freire, 1972; Gunbayi, 2020a; McNiff, 2013).

While action research is highly contextual and participatory, critics argue that it lacks generalizability and is vulnerable to researcher bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Additionally, some policymakers and funding bodies prefer RCTs, as they offer quantifiable and standardized evidence (Greenhalgh et al., 2014).

Table 1.

Comparing RCTs and action research in research design

Aspect	Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs)	Action Research (AR)
Paradigm	Radical Structuralist & Functionalist	Interpretive & Radical Humanist
Ontology	Objective reality exists independently	Reality is socially constructed
Epistemology	Positivist, empirical, reductionist	Constructivist, participatory, critical
Methodology	Experimental, statistical, fixed protocols	Iterative, flexible, dialogical
Control & Flexibility	High control, low flexibility	Low control, high flexibility
Ethical Considerations	Control groups may be denied interventions	Inclusive and participatory ethics
Application	Medical trials, policy testing	Community-based research, education reform

While RCTs and action research are traditionally seen as oppositional, some researchers advocate for methodological pluralism, integrating both approaches to balance rigor and relevance (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). For example:

- *Hybrid designs:* Combining RCTs with qualitative methods (e.g., interviews and focus groups) to understand patient experiences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).
- *Participatory RCTs:* Involving stakeholders in trial design to increase ethical validity and real-world applicability (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009).
- *Iterative experimentation:* Using RCTs to test interventions, followed by action research cycles to refine their implementation (Greenhalgh et al., 2014).

By integrating positivist and interpretivist approaches, researchers can develop more holistic, ethical, and context-sensitive methodologies in social sciences, healthcare, and policy research.

Experimental action research in mixed methods approaches

Whitehead and Schneider (2013) highlight the value of mixed methods research in nursing and midwifery, emphasizing its ability to integrate quantitative and qualitative insights. Action research, as a form of mixed methods research, allows for iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, making it particularly relevant for applied fields (Gunbayi, 2020a). By combining empirical data with experiential knowledge, action research enhances both the validity and applicability of findings in practice-based disciplines.

Mixed methods research has gained increasing recognition in applied disciplines such as healthcare, nursing, midwifery, and education, as it effectively integrates quantitative rigor with qualitative depth (Whitehead & Schneider, 2013). Within this framework, Experimental action research (EAR) emerges as a hybrid approach that combines experimental methodologies (such as RCTs) with participatory, iterative cycles of action research (AR) (Gunbayi, 2020a).

This approach is particularly useful in practice-based disciplines, where the application of findings in real-world settings is essential. While RCTs provide empirical validation, action research ensures adaptability and relevance, making experimental action research (EAR) a pragmatic bridge between the two paradigms (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to enhance validity, depth, and applicability of research findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Whitehead and Schneider (2013) emphasize that mixed methods designs are particularly valuable in nursing and midwifery research, as they allow for the integration of statistical analysis (quantitative) with experiential insights (qualitative).

Experimental action research (EAR) integrates RCTs' structured experimentation with action research's iterative cycles, enabling both causal inference and context-sensitive adaptation (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This combination ensures that interventions are tested rigorously (through experimental design) while also evolving dynamically (through action research principles) (Greenhalgh et al., 2014).

Table 2.

Comparing RCTs, action research, and experimental action research

Aspect	Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs)	Action Research (AR)	Experimental Action Research (EAR)
Paradigm	Positivist, Functionalist	Interpretivist, Participatory	Pragmatist, Integrative
Epistemology	Objective, empirical validation	Subjective, socially constructed knowledge	Combination of both
Methodology	Controlled experiments, randomization	Iterative cycles of planning, action, and reflection	Experimental validation with iterative refinement
Control vs. Adaptability	High control, low adaptability	Low control, high adaptability	Balanced control and adaptability
Application	Healthcare trials, policy research	Education, social sciences, community-based research	Applied healthcare, nursing, social intervention programs
Ethical Considerations	Control groups may be denied interventions	Ethical participatory engagement	Combines ethical validity with empirical rigor

While RCTs offer high internal validity, they often lack external validity, meaning that results may not generalize well to real-world settings (Cartwright, 2011). Action Research, on the other hand, focuses on real-world applications but lacks the controlled rigor of RCTs (Bryman, 2016).

By integrating both approaches, EAR ensures empirical validity: experimental control confirms whether an intervention is effective (Bonell et al., 2012) and contextual adaptability: iterative cycles allow interventions to be refined based on participant feedback and contextual needs (Gunbayi, 2020a).

EAR follows a cyclical approach, aligning with Lewin's (1946) model of action research while incorporating experimental elements:

1. Planning – Identifying the problem, designing an intervention (informed by RCT frameworks),
2. Action (Implementation Phase) – Conducting the intervention, collecting quantitative and qualitative data,
3. Observation – Assessing intervention effectiveness through both statistical analysis and participant reflections,
4. Reflection & adjustment – Modifying the intervention based on real-world complexities, then retesting.

This cycle ensures both scientific rigor (quantitative validation) and practical relevance (qualitative adaptation) (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Limitations of randomized controlled trials

While RCTs are considered the gold standard in medical and psychological research, they pose significant limitations in social sciences, nursing, and humanities. These limitations include ethical concerns, issues with ecological validity, challenges in implementation, lack of generalizability, and methodological rigidity.

Ethical concerns: One of the primary ethical concerns in RCTs is the denial of potentially beneficial treatments to control groups. When an intervention is expected to be effective, withholding it may be considered unethical, especially in healthcare and social research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In addition, the use of placebos in clinical trials raises ethical dilemmas when established treatments are already available (Emanuel, Wendler & Grady, 2000). Furthermore, obtaining informed consent may not always be straightforward, as full disclosure of research conditions can influence participant behavior, leading to biased results (Miller & Brody, 2003).

Limited ecological validity: RCTs are often conducted in highly controlled environments that may not reflect real-world complexities (Cohen et al., 2018). In the social sciences, real-life settings involve multiple interacting variables that cannot be fully controlled in an experimental design (Cartwright & Hardie, 2012). Additionally, interventions tested in one context may not be applicable in another due to cultural or structural differences (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Challenges in implementation: RCTs require substantial financial and logistical resources, making them costly and time-consuming (Deaton & Cartwright, 2018). This issue is particularly pronounced in large-scale studies where funding and participant retention become major concerns. Furthermore, external factors such as socioeconomic status, environmental influences, and policy changes can introduce variability that is difficult to control. Additionally, high dropout rates and participant non-compliance can distort results, reducing the reliability of findings (Hernan & Robins, 2016).

Limited generalizability: RCTs often use strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, which can limit the diversity of study populations. As a result, findings may not generalize to broader populations, particularly in social science and healthcare research. Many RCTs also focus on short-term outcomes rather than long-term effects, leading to gaps in understanding the sustained impact of interventions. Context-specific results further challenge generalizability, as interventions effective in one region or demographic may not yield similar outcomes in different settings (Cartwright, 2011).

Rigidity and lack of adaptability: The structured nature of RCTs can hinder their ability to adapt to evolving research questions. Many trials follow fixed protocols that do not allow for mid-study adjustments based on emerging findings (Allyn et al, 2015). This limitation is particularly problematic

in healthcare and social sciences, where conditions change dynamically, requiring more flexible research methodologies (Greenhalgh et al., 2014). Additionally, some RCTs may fail to capture complex interventions that require iterative and context-specific modifications (Craig et al., 2008).

Practical barriers in social science research: In social sciences, randomization itself can be challenging. Assigning individuals or communities to treatment and control groups is often met with resistance, particularly in education and policy research. Additionally, blinding participants and researchers is difficult in behavioral and social interventions, increasing the risk of bias (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Another challenge is intervention contamination, where individuals in the control group may be inadvertently exposed to the intervention, thereby weakening the effect size (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Risk of Publication Bias: RCTs that yield statistically significant results are more likely to be published, while studies with null or negative findings may remain unpublished (Dwan et al., 2013). This publication bias can distort the available evidence and lead to an overestimation of intervention effectiveness (Ioannidis, 2005).

The practical and ethical advantages of action research

Action research, by contrast, is inherently collaborative, engaging stakeholders in problem identification, intervention, and evaluation. This aligns with the ethical imperative to respect participants as co-creators of knowledge rather than passive subjects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In nursing and midwifery, action research supports evidence-based practice by allowing healthcare professionals to refine interventions in real-time, enhancing patient-centered care (Whitehead & Schneider, 2013).

Action research (AR) is a collaborative, participatory approach that engages stakeholders in problem identification, intervention, and evaluation, ensuring context-relevant and ethically sound research outcomes (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). In contrast to randomized controlled trials (RCTs), which prioritize control and generalizability, AR fosters adaptability, inclusivity, and real-time intervention refinement (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

In healthcare, nursing, and midwifery, AR has been recognized as a valuable tool for evidence-based practice, particularly because it respects participants as co-creators of knowledge rather than passive subjects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This ethical imperative enhances patient-centered care while also addressing practical limitations associated with RCTs (Whitehead & Schneider, 2013).

RCTs emphasize standardization, randomization, and controlled conditions to ensure high internal validity (Bonell et al., 2012). However, this rigidity often limits their applicability to real-world healthcare settings, where patient needs and clinical conditions are dynamic (Greenhalgh et al., 2014). In contrast, AR allows for iterative modifications based on ongoing stakeholder feedback (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), integrates real-world complexities, ensuring that interventions are practically feasible and context-sensitive (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011) and bridges the gap between research and practice, making it more suitable for healthcare professionals seeking immediate improvements in patient care (Whitehead & Schneider, 2013).

RCTs maintain strict researcher control, with participants often treated as passive subjects (Cartwright, 2011). This hierarchical structure can lead to mistrust and reduced participant engagement, particularly in community-based and healthcare research (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003). In contrast, AR involves participants as active collaborators in the research process (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), enhances engagement, trust, and compliance, leading to higher retention rates and more meaningful data (Greenwood & Levin, 2007) and encourages interdisciplinary teamwork, making it particularly effective in healthcare settings where collaboration among nurses, doctors, and patients is crucial (Whitehead & Schneider, 2013).

RCTs often prioritize scientific objectivity over participant autonomy, sometimes leading to ethical dilemmas (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One major concern is the withholding of beneficial interventions from control groups, raising questions about fairness and patient rights (Bonell et al., 2012). AR, on the other hand empowers participants by involving them in decision-making, ensuring that research is conducted with rather than on people (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011), respects autonomy and agency, making it a more ethical approach in settings where collaborative care and patient empowerment are essential (Baum et al., 2006) and minimizes ethical risks associated with randomization, as all participants actively shape and refine interventions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

In healthcare, nursing, and midwifery, ethical research demands that patient welfare is prioritized over rigid experimental control. While RCTs may delay treatment for control groups, AR ensures that all participants benefit from continuous intervention improvements (Greenhalgh et al., 2014). An example in nursing ethics can be illustrated as follows: One limitation of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) is that they necessitate the inclusion of a control group receiving standard care, even when preliminary findings suggest that the new wound care treatment may be highly effective. Conversely, an advantage of action research (AR) is its capacity to allow nurses to dynamically adjust treatments, ensuring that all patients have access to potential benefits as they emerge (Whitehead & Schneider, 2013).

While RCTs remain the gold standard for establishing causality, their practical and ethical limitations make them less suitable for dynamic, practice-based disciplines like nursing and midwifery (Bonell et al., 2012). A hybrid approach, such as Experimental Action Research (EAR), combines the empirical rigor of RCTs with the collaborative, adaptive nature of AR, ensuring scientific credibility while maintaining ethical integrity (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), actionable insights that are immediately applicable in healthcare settings (Greenwood & Levin, 2007) and ethical respect for participants, ensuring beneficence and justice in clinical trials (Baum et al., 2006).

Conclusion and Discussion

The ongoing debate between positivism and interpretivism remains central in the social, behavioral, health, and human sciences, as each paradigm offers unique strengths and limitations. Positivism provides structure, objectivity, and generalizability but often overlooks the complexities of human experiences. In contrast, interpretivism values context, meaning, and subjectivity yet is frequently criticized for its lack of replicability and generalizability. This epistemological divide underscores the need for methodological pluralism to balance scientific rigor with humanistic inquiry (Marrow, 1969).

Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) have long been regarded as the gold standard for establishing causality in scientific research. However, their application in social sciences, nursing, and humanities presents significant challenges, including ethical dilemmas, ecological validity concerns, implementation difficulties, and limited adaptability. These constraints necessitate the integration of alternative methodologies, such as qualitative research, mixed methods approaches, and observational studies, to capture the complexity of real-world social and healthcare issues.

RCTs and action research represent contrasting methodological approaches, each rooted in distinct paradigms. RCTs, aligned with radical structuralist and functionalist paradigm, emphasize objectivity, causality, and predictability, yet they often oversimplify complex social phenomena. Conversely, action research, founded in interpretivism and radical humanism, prioritizes context, participation, and social transformation but lacks generalizability and control inherent in experimental designs. As research fields evolve, incorporating both experimental rigor and participatory engagement can lead to more comprehensive and contextually relevant findings (Marrow, 1969).

Experimental action research (EAR) emerges as a viable middle ground, combining the empirical rigor of RCTs with the participatory flexibility of action research. This methodology is particularly relevant in healthcare, nursing, and education, where evidence-based yet context-sensitive interventions are necessary. EAR ensures scientific credibility while allowing for iterative refinements based on real-

world insights (Gunbayi, 2020a). By integrating experimental and participatory research elements, EAR enhances validity, ethical soundness, and the applicability of interventions, making it a valuable approach for mixed methods researchers in practice-based fields.

Action research offers notable ethical and practical advantages over RCTs, particularly in healthcare, nursing, and social sciences. By involving stakeholders as co-researchers, it fosters ethical inclusivity and real-world adaptability, making it a more suitable methodology for patient-centered care. While RCTs remain crucial for establishing causality, their rigid structure and ethical constraints often limit their applicability in dynamic, practice-oriented settings. The growing recognition of participatory, mixed methods approaches like EAR signifies a shift toward more inclusive, ethical, and practice-informed research paradigms (Whitehead & Schneider, 2013).

As Lewin (1946) asserted, "No action without research; no research without action", and experimental action research necessitates a controlled investigation into the comparative effectiveness of various techniques within nearly identical social contexts. Among the different forms of action research, the experimental approach holds the greatest potential for advancing scientific knowledge. Under favorable conditions, it enables the definitive testing of specific hypotheses. However, it is also the most challenging form of action research to implement successfully (Marrow, 1969).

In summary, experimental action research provides a more context-sensitive, ethically sound, and practically relevant research approach in social sciences, nursing, midwifery, and humanities. By acknowledging the complexity of human experiences and fostering participatory engagement, EAR addresses the limitations of RCTs. Drawing upon theoretical perspectives from Guba (1981); Lincoln and Guba (1985), Habermas (1987), Gunbayi and Sorm (2018), Whitehead and Schneider (2013), Gunbayi (2020a,b), and Marrow (1969), this article highlights the necessity of methodological pluralism and underscores the superiority of action research in applied disciplines.

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Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the author.

Author Contribution

Corresponding author Ilhan Gunbayi: Conceptualization, data curation, investigation, methodology, writing original draft, review & editing

Declaration of Competing Interest

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Ethics Approval

In the writing process of the study titled “**Experimental action research as the preferred methodology in social, behavioral, health and human sciences**”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the author of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data. “Journal of Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, and all responsibility belongs to the author and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

Institutional review board (IRB) approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this research is not required.

Data Availability Statement

Anonymised data from this study can be made available on request from jaqmer.editor@gmail.com

Challenges faced by school administrators in school management

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Abstract. This study aimed to examine the challenges school administrators in Kepez district of Antalya faced in their communication with teachers and the solutions they found to these challenges. The research was carried out in the Kepez district of Antalya and involved seven school principals. It is a qualitative study using phenomenological design and maximum variation sampling technique. The findings of the research indicated that school principals primarily focused on their legal responsibilities, strived to fulfill their managerial duties using available resources, and placed importance on the structure based on tasks and responsibilities. While struggling with limited resources and bureaucratic obstacles, principals developed various strategies to establish effective communication with teachers and maintained their motivation. However, the research also revealed that the process of making the school climate contributing to learning and teaching was not given sufficient importance or was overshadowed by other structural and material issues. This situation might negatively affect student achievement and teacher satisfaction. In conclusion, school administrators should continuously develop both their managerial skills and communication strategies to adapt to these significant transformations in education.

Keywords: School principal, teacher, communication problems, school climate

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Introduction

The school administrator, as the leader of the school team, should be a good role model for others through their personal and professional qualities. Demonstrating good practices in educational management requires balancing internal and external dynamics of the school and adopting multiple perspectives. The contextual nature of management practices, their multifaceted character, and the combination of uncertainties, individualism, and collective characteristics make it essential for educational administrators to adopt a strategic perspective (Balci, 2011).

It is of great importance for educational administrators to continuously develop their leadership skills and remain open to innovations for the success of schools. The core competencies that school principals should possess are shaped around leadership skills. The analysis of problems, the decision-making process, and the implementation of appropriate solution strategies are fundamentally linked to the leadership abilities of school principals, and more importantly, to their instructional leadership behaviors. These skills are necessary for the school administrator to function effectively as a leader. Understanding the organizational structure helps school principals better comprehend the problems they encounter and produce effective solutions (Kaya, 1979).

Considering situation-specific differences in the decision-making process and taking these differences into account during the adaptation process are also of critical importance. These characteristics are expressed as the essential skills that school principals must possess as instructional leaders. Accurately

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analyzing problems and serving as an example during the solution process are important parts of their leadership roles (Şişman, 2011).

The management principles of planning, organizing, budgeting, and personnel selection, expressed by Western thinkers in the early 20th century, were reinterpreted in the second half of the century under the influence of human relations approaches and postmodern paradigms. Since the beginning of the 21st century, more flexible, human- and group-centered approaches have taken their place in the organizational world. Discussions in the context of democracy and human rights, along with international standards, place humans at the center of organizational life (Gümüşeli, 2001).

All these transformations in the world of organization and management inevitably affect schools, requiring school principals to be proactive in responding to the expectations and needs of teachers, students, parents, and the broader social environment. In this era, parents have become more concerned with their children's educational needs, contribute to schools according to their budgets, and hold teachers and administrators accountable, becoming a significant part of the educational and managerial activities in schools. Students, on the other hand, are more focused on their own abilities, are careful in selecting schools, strive to be an active part of primary teaching, challenge rules and traditions more often, and question the traditional roles of teachers and administrators. Similarly, teachers are also taking on new roles to meet the changing expectations of the students and parents they serve and to sustain their individual development. These changing roles, expectations, needs, and situational conditions constantly redefine the roles of school administrators, teachers, and students (Bayrak & Terzi, 2004; Çelikten, 2004).

The transformation of school principals' leadership roles has become an inevitable necessity. For administrators caught in chaos and conflict, traditional management principles are inadequate to meet today's expectations and needs. Leaders who fail to recognize the need for change and view maintaining the status quo as ideal management cannot withstand internal and external pressures (Bursalıoğlu, 2012; Şişman, 2011).

The concept of contingency management suggests that the principles emerging at the intersection of an organization's goals, members, and the expectations of its audience become the most ideal management principles for that organization. The new public management approach—emphasizing accountability, student-centered leadership, standardized criteria, information society, globalization, and multiculturalism—has significantly altered the context of educational management (Balci, 2011).

Adapting to new circumstances requires flexible rules and structures, making the perspective and value system of school administrators crucial. This has also led to debates around standardized teacher competencies (Özoğlu, 2010). Major societal problems, ideological conflicts, value crises, and economic challenges impact the relationship between administrators and teachers, reflecting broader cause-and-effect dynamics (Ertürk, 1984).

In today's complex organizational and societal dynamics, the shift from traditional, technically focused management to human-centered and flexible leadership approaches has become unavoidable (Bursalıoğlu, 2012; Şişman, 2011).

Aristotle emphasized the impact of education on both societal and individual development. Education contributes to the moral and social growth of individuals, and school administrators play a crucial role in this process (Turan, 2011).

School principals are responsible not only for administrative tasks but also for socio-psychological roles. They must empathize with all stakeholders, understand their needs, and adapt to societal and cultural changes. Effective principles develop strategies to maximize the potential of teachers and students, thereby enhancing school success (Bayrak & Terzi, 2004).

As individuals, principals should communicate with empathy, considering the family and cultural backgrounds of others. As leaders, they must share the school's values and goals with teachers and students, fostering a positive learning environment. As citizens, they should embrace societal diversity and contribute to social integration, developing healthy relationships with the community. Effective principals balance improving educational performance with a broad sense of social responsibility (Çelikten, 2004).

Organizations under environmental pressures need leaders with strong leadership qualities who can adapt and acquire new competencies. Effective communication between school administrators and teachers is crucial for successful school management and improvement of the educational environment. A management style that fosters meaningful communication and collaboration is more effective than an authoritarian approach. Principals play a central role in problem-solving and should have the necessary knowledge, experience, and analytical skills (Hoy & Miskel, 2010).

The 21st century has brought significant global changes that have deeply impacted education systems. Technological advancements, shifts in social dynamics, and economic transformations are reshaping the management processes of educational institutions. Consequently, educational institutions must adopt new management approaches, and school administrators are required to redefine their roles. School principals face responsibilities such as effective communication with teachers, improving the school climate, and enhancing the quality of education. Thus, this study aims to analyze the challenges faced by school administrators in the Kepez district of Antalya in their communication with teachers and the solutions they have implemented to address these issues.

Methodology

This research was carried using a descriptive phenomenological design, a qualitative research method based on interpretive paradigm (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018). The phenomenological design focuses on topics that are known but require in-depth and detailed investigation (Polkinghorne, 1989). This approach aims to analyze the structures and relationships used by individuals in their daily lives to understand their social worlds and to uncover hidden meanings within verbal and written texts. Thus, This research employs a qualitative study design using the phenomenological approach, which focuses on understanding phenomena through the lived experiences of individuals. Maximum variation sampling was used to select a group of seven school principals in the Kepez district of Antalya. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and a thematic analysis was carried out to identify themes related to communication challenges between school administrators and teachers. The study focuses on exploring the current state of communication, the underlying causes of communication problems, and the strategies implemented by administrators to resolve these issues.

This study was conducted using a descriptive method to thoroughly examine the issues between school principals and teachers. The qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews with school principals were analyzed and interpreted based on the interview questions and themes identified during the analysis. Based on the information gathered, comprehensive descriptions of the current state of the teacher-principal communication process and potential sources of problems were attempted.

Sampling

Seven school principals who participated in the study were selected using the maximum variation sampling technique based on purposive sampling method. Maximum variation sampling aims to identify common or shared phenomena across different situations and to reveal different dimensions of the problem according to this diversity (Palys, 2008).

The data collected through interviews reflect the participants' worlds of meaning, their ways of interpreting their experiences, and their emotions and thoughts. In this method, context-specific meanings are revealed through an interpretive approach. Since meanings are culturally and socially

constructed, the data obtained during qualitative interviews are deep, rich, and detailed (Willis, 2007; Kuş, 2009).

The research was conducted in a total of 7 schools in the Kepez district of Antalya province, including 3 primary schools, 2 middle schools, 1 science high school, and 1 Religious high school. The study specifically included schools with a high number of students and teachers, including 3 primary schools, 2 middle schools, and 2 high schools, and 7 school principals were included in the research. Information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Participant Information

Participants	Gender	Age	Seniority	Administrative Seniority	Subject	Education Level
P1	Male	41	15	7	Primary	Master's Degree
P2	Female	42	17	8	Primary	Bachelor's Degree
P3	Male	39	12	6	Primary	Bachelor's Degree
P4	Male	56	31	15	Social Studies	Master's Degree
P5	Female	37	14	9	Physical Education	Bachelor's Degree
P6	Male	49	23	13	Religious Culture and Ethics	Bachelor's Degree
P7	Male	38	16	8	English	Bachelor's Degree

Data collection

In the study, an interview technique was used, and to enhance validity and reliability, a semi-structured interview form was prepared. The method and stages of the research were explained clearly and in detail to the participants, and additional information was provided on any unclear topics. After the questions for school principals were reviewed by experts, a pilot interview was conducted with one principal. Following necessary adjustments, the main interviews were carried out. The prepared questions were open-ended, with some questions including alternative questions and probes. The interviews were conducted in a friendly conversational setting at times and places deemed suitable by the participants, with information about the topic provided beforehand. The interviews with the principals were recorded, and notes were taken during the sessions. The findings were presented descriptively, ensuring they were meaningful and consistent within themselves. Additionally, the findings were considered realistic by the individuals who participated in the research.

Ethics statement

This study adheres to the highest ethical standards in research. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights before participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary involvement. To maintain confidentiality, participants' names have been anonymized and pseudonyms have been used throughout the study.

Interviews were conducted in a manner that avoided leading questions and were recorded with the participants' consent. The recordings were played back to participants at the end of each interview to verify accuracy.

The data collected were documented and analyzed with care, and all findings were reported accurately. Direct quotes were used where necessary to ensure authenticity, and clear, accessible language was employed to present the findings. The study complies with ethical guidelines and has been conducted with respect for the dignity and rights of all participants.

Rigour

This study has adhered to the highest standards of rigour throughout its research process. All methodological procedures were conducted with meticulous attention to detail, ensuring accuracy and reliability in every aspect of the study (Gunbayi, 2024; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The research design was carefully planned and implemented, with a thorough review of the literature and careful selection of appropriate methods and tools. Data collection and analysis were performed systematically and consistently, following established protocols to maintain validity and reliability. To ensure the credibility of the findings, multiple data sources were triangulated, and the research process was continuously monitored for adherence to ethical and methodological standards. Detailed records were kept of all procedures, decisions, and modifications to provide transparency and facilitate replication. The results were analyzed with precision, and interpretations were based on rigorous examination of the data. Peer review and feedback were sought to validate the findings and enhance the study's overall quality. By upholding these standards, the study aims to contribute valuable and reliable insights to the field, demonstrating a commitment to rigorous research practices.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were transcribed and used to create a framework for descriptive and content analysis. Data consistent with the conceptual framework were defined and interpreted as findings. The care was taken to use clear and understandable language in the description and presentation of the findings, and direct quotes were provided where necessary.

Findings

Communication with Teachers and Encountered Problems

The findings revealed that school principals primarily focused on their legal responsibilities, utilizing available resources to fulfill their management duties. The study highlights that principals often prioritize structural and administrative duties over the development of a positive school climate. Communication problems between principals and teachers often stem from organizational misunderstandings, ineffective communication channels, and a lack of accountability among teachers. Additionally, teachers' insufficient knowledge of organizational structures and reluctance to adopt new teaching methods contribute to the communication breakdown. The study also emphasizes that bureaucratic obstacles and limited resources hinder the effective implementation of communication strategies. Principals described the communication problems they face with teachers in management as follows:

- **Lack of Knowledge about Organizational Structure:** Teachers are often unaware of the organizational structure.
- **Ineffective Communication Channels:** Communication channels are not functioning properly.
- **Lack of Sense of Duty:** Issues such as not arriving on time for duty or not being present at duty locations.
- **Non-compliance with Class Times:** Not adhering to class start times.
- **Delayed Submission of Documents:** Delays in submitting lesson plans, activity reports, departmental documents, and other paperwork.
- **Lack of Responsibility and Sincerity:** Insufficient responsibility, sincerity, and lack of communication with parents.
- **Communication Breakdown:** Communication gaps between teachers and school administration.
- **Personal and Professional Problems:** Problems related to personal and professional life, lack of empathy, and school culture.
- **Professional Inadequacy:** Teachers' professional incompetence, burnout, errors in teacher appointments, resistance to change, and lack of enthusiasm for duties and compliance with regulations.

Principals also noted that teachers often did not know the regulations well, think individually, did not read books, and failed to renew themselves. It was noted that teachers did not know the organizational structure well and did not behave according to the hierarchy. Some teachers treated the teaching profession as secondary and prioritized their personal matters, indicating a lack of professional awareness. Inadequate knowledge of regulations and cultural differences created communication difficulties. Additionally, some teachers were reported to be unable to keep up with development and renew themselves, leading to professional inadequacy. Some statements of principals' are as follows:

"Problems related to fulfilling duties are particularly prominent, such as supervision, class entry and exit times, document submission, and responsibility towards students. First and foremost, teachers should bring their issues to us, rather than us identifying them ourselves." (P1)

"Teachers do not fully understand the regulations, and knowing them too well can slow one down. A teacher with 19 years of experience who does not know how to prepare departmental and annual plans should not be a teacher. Teachers should not be inadequately trained. There are serious issues in teacher training. Additionally, teachers do not read, renew themselves, or know the methods and techniques, especially older teachers." (P3)

"One must not forget that they are human, which is very important. Many of our teachers act in a disorganized, free, and careless manner and are quite comfortable with it. Freedom is important, but work should be done in accordance with the system. It is more accurate to say that some teachers resist change. However, there are also colleagues who do their jobs seriously and with enthusiasm. We do not tolerate those who do not fulfill their duties." (P6)

"Primary teachers should not have deficiencies in regulations and professional knowledge. The teaching profession should be proficient both in knowledge and artistic aspects. They should be open to broader criticism in their relationships. In schools where decisions are made collaboratively, there are no implementation issues." (P7)

Analysis of Communication Problems and Solutions

Traditional educational management research often limits theoretical understanding of human experiences in problem-solving, strategic planning, and implementation by excluding emotions. In this context, it is understood that school principals evaluate the problems in communication with teachers, particularly in terms of not adhering to regulations. Issues such as adherence to the hierarchy and meticulousness in regulations related to supervision, discipline, dress code, planning, and class entry times are seen by principals as major communication problems. Teachers' roles and responsibilities within the school were evaluated based on these criteria. The emphasis on technical issues such as supervision, class entry and exit, document management, daily and yearly planning, discipline adherence, professional competence, and regulation knowledge indicated that principals focused more on technical aspects rather than emotions and values in their management and communication with teachers.

Educational administrators are expected to consider both individual and school goals as well as their social responsibilities. Schools are organizations established to fulfill moral purposes and prepare youth to meet societal responsibilities. In addition to legal and professional responsibilities, educational administrators have a moral responsibility to meet societal expectations. Reconstructing the school is both a technical and moral responsibility.

Principals were observed to provide informal guidance to teachers, remind them of regulations, emphasize the importance of issues, engage in dialogue and persuasion, take preventive measures, and conduct meetings to address communication problems. For instance, P3 and P7 stated:

"First, I make sure that teacher colleagues realize the situation. I empathize, but teachers should also do the same, although they rarely see the need. Everyone thinks in terms of their own interests." (P3)

"Informal discussions are conducted with colleagues who do not fulfill their duties to provide necessary guidance. If there are professional deficiencies, it is the school administration's duty to address them. If there is intent, informal resources shift towards formal ones to avoid organizational injustice." (P7)

Principals' Emphasis on Ideal Teacher Profile

Principals prioritized teachers who were knowledgeable about regulations, self-develop, perform their duties voluntarily and with affection for students, and were respectful, tolerant, humanistic, and constructive. They preferred teachers who developed themselves both personally and professionally and valued the importance of principles. According to P1, P4, and P5:

"A teacher should be respectful, tolerant, humanistic, unifying, and inclusive. They should communicate well and have a clear mind. They should be problem-solvers, not problem-makers. They must strive to solve issues and use appropriate methods. They should diagnose and treat issues correctly." (P1)

"Teaching should be based on voluntarism. Love for humanity should be paramount. Teachers should not have excuses. They should be constructivist, perform good guidance, and engage with each student individually." (P4)

"Human values, love for the country and people, and love for the profession should be prioritized. Additionally, they should renew themselves and be enthusiastic." (P5)

The development of the education and school system is possible through effective collaboration between administrators and teachers, and the establishment of mutual trust. Principals' sincere, honest, open, problem-solving approach, proactivity, and communication with the environment are crucial for collaboration and trust. This also requires upper management to be sensitive to poor attitudes towards teachers. While regulatory knowledge is a prerequisite, qualities such as alignment with accepted societal values are prioritized by principals. Many tasks and responsibilities related to teachers were emphasized, and the ideal teacher profile was expressed by principals.

In social sciences, there is a shift from dogmatic positivism, which reduces ethical and moral issues to individual preferences and biases, to understandings that recognize organizational and public life as arenas for moral struggle and human actions. This shift, called post-positivism, post-structuralism, post-liberalism, or the re-conceptualization of traditional virtues, character, and justice, indicates a clear move away from extreme rationalism.

Problem-solving is a path to effective learning and individual skill development. It involves time, effort, energy, and practice. It is multifaceted as it involves needs, goals, values, beliefs, skills, habits, and attitudes, and combines elements such as creative thought, intelligence, emotion, will, and action. The problem-solving process begins with courage, willingness, and self-confidence. School administrators often report issues such as teachers' inability to keep up with changes, lack of communication with school management and parents, professional inadequacies, feelings of burnout, lack of empathy, and prioritizing personal matters over teaching. It is stated that problems are inherent wherever there are people.

Issues Related to School Management

In the context of issues related to school management, the difficulties faced by school principals in managing schools, solutions to challenges within the school, and opinions on effectively and successfully managing the school have been examined. It appears that, beyond communication with teachers, environmental and material resources that affect the school preoccupy school principals more. In other words, when it comes to management, principals focus more on the level at which they can manage the school with the resources they have, expressing that they are compelled to prioritize material resources over human resources.

The difficulties encountered by school principals in school management concentrate on issues such as lack of parental involvement, communication deficiencies, absence of support staff, cleaning, heating, deficiencies in teachers and equipment, inadequate planning related to teaching, insufficient activity of parent-teacher associations, and inadequate school budgets. Additionally, simple bureaucratic obstacles that cannot be overcome are also mentioned as other factors exacerbating the situation. The lack of attention to cleanliness in an environment with hundreds of people and the absence of necessary funds for this are considered significant health-related issues. It is emphasized that schools are left alone in terms of financial resources, forced to manage with a tight budget, and the requirement for free and compulsory primary education is an additional factor putting administrators in a difficult position. In this context, P6 and P4's views are as follows:

“Cleaning is a very important issue; there are 210 people in my school, but there is not a single permanent cleaning staff. The school needs to be cleaned every break. If you employ someone, it is a financial burden. You want to provide technical support in the classroom, but there are financial shortages. School principals have no planning related to education and teaching. We are constantly doing menial tasks and holding meetings, which I can't say are very effective... The changes being made not being conducted by people with an educational background creates problems both theoretically and practically.” (P6)

“Electricity, water, and heating costs are covered by the special administration. On the other hand, the absence of support staff is a problem in itself... Firstly, our schools have been left to their financial fate. The amounts we collect under donations often do not solve our problems. My school has 25 teachers and 600 students; its budget is 30,000 TL, of which 15,000 TL is used for the four support staff and their insurance. The remaining amount is used for various needs of the school. How do you think 600 people can be managed economically?” (P4)

It is understood that school principals sometimes feel helpless due to financial constraints when facing problems in management and try to solve these within the hierarchical structure, often without achieving the desired results. It is also noted that principals' participation in numerous meetings negatively affects school management. Moreover, problems based on financial issues, such as cleaning, lack of support staff, and activating parent-teacher associations, are seen as the most emphasized problems by principals.

In recent years, with the impact of changes and developments in social, economic, political, and technological fields, educational initiatives and school management are increasingly moving away from centralization. Especially, the interest of parents, civil society organizations, and local institutions in education and schools, and their desire to participate in educational decisions are growing each day. In many countries, the responsibility of those benefiting from these services in providing educational funding is changing the nature and boundaries of school-community relations. With all these changes and developments, it is expressed that managing today's schools with a classical approach is no longer feasible.

School principals expressed that they tried methods such as addressing the root cause of the problem, consulting, delegating tasks, working in collaboration, benefiting from experiences, managing according to individuals, and reminding of organizational hierarchy. In this regard, P3, P2, and P6 state:

“First, I try to address the issue by understanding and analyzing it well. Then, I consult with my management team and school family association members to prioritize the importance of the issue and take necessary actions. I also involve school boards in the matter and make sure to document everything in the decision book, meaning I have a collaborative management approach.” (P3)

“A school principal must be very good at crisis management. Experience is very important; problems encountered do not surprise us in later years. 450 people require 450 different management styles.” (P2)

“Each school is structurally different. Since the goals and resources of the school vary, the problems will also differ.” (P6)

It is emphasized that since schools are structurally different, problems will also differ. School principals underlined the importance of understanding the root cause of the problem, activating boards and associations, being proficient in crisis management, and adopting a management approach based on individual needs. Principals also stated that to manage a school successfully, it was crucial to establish a good structure, form a good management team, make decisions collectively, act sincerely, and uphold institutional culture by sharing problems. In this context, P3 and P6 state:

“The understanding that ‘the principal manages the school’ is incorrect. If you say ‘I know everything,’ it is impossible to work harmoniously with that staff or participate in a social event. If you do not value people’s opinions, they will not value you and will not embrace the institution or the organization. You must definitely be a leader, not just a principal.” (P3)

“The institutional culture must be good. The institution should take ownership of its staff and also the problems. It should be sincere and convincing in solving problems. Additionally, it should have a philosophy of covering faults, generating solutions, planning, and addressing the root causes of problems. We should conduct self-criticism and be engaged in teamwork. We should also recognize our shortcomings and seek support.” (P6)

As a cultural leader, a school administrator should spend time and energy enhancing traditions, group norms, and shared values in the school environment and should be able to take preemptive measures to address potential problems. It was mentioned by school principals that they tried to solve financial problems with their own means and that they did not have sufficient resources to address financial issues. As a result, it was emphasized that it was not the principal alone but the management team, formed boards, and other assigned management members who managed the school, highlighting the importance of teamwork.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study examined the challenges faced by school principals and their reflections on school management. The findings revealed that school principals experienced issues related to the school budget, support staff services, education, and the environment. Principals primarily expressed concerns about managing the school budget and general and administrative services. While it is important for today's administrators to address problems with tailored approaches depending on the person and situation, presenting different solutions to the same problem can hinder consistency in institutional culture. Due to the principals' incorrect attitudes and behaviors, there may be a lack of trust among staff, leading to decreased organizational commitment, job performance, and job satisfaction, ultimately causing issues to arise spontaneously. Thus, it is crucial for school principals to maintain consistency in organizational management.

School administrators developed both formal and informal solutions to problems encountered within the organizational structure. When teachers, students, parents, and other environmental factors that constitute the organization are guided in accordance with the school culture and climate, problems are resolved before they start. However, when a positive relationship is not established among these dynamics, conflicts cannot be prevented. School administrators typically start by identifying the problem and aim to resolve it through consultation, while also utilizing informal methods. At times, they resort to formal solutions. The problems encountered, which vary by individual and institution, lead to different solution proposals, as emphasized by some administrators. The role of principals in leadership is considered crucial in the communication process (Tahaoglu & Gedikoğlu, 2009).

Principals faced various obstacles in fulfilling their leadership roles, which often result in not meeting the desired level of performance. Decision-making and problem-solving are fundamental to the

management of any organization, including schools. Schools, like other social institutions, are affected by social, economic, cultural, political, scientific, and technological developments, both positively and negatively. Adapting schools to these changes and developments is among the tasks of school management. In this context, school principals need to possess the necessary knowledge and skills for decision-making and problem-solving (Çinkır, 2010).

Principals generally adhered to regulations in their practices, considered the professional competencies of teachers, support teamwork, and create a constructive competitive environment within the school. They also ensured that teachers contributed to decision-making processes.

As stewards of both societal and ethical responsibilities, school administrators must embrace a profound sense of accountability towards all levels of society, both horizontally across different sectors and vertically through various tiers of governance. Their role encompasses a significant responsibility towards students, who are entrusted to schools during a critical developmental stage when they are particularly vulnerable. Ensuring the safety, growth, and education of these students—who are often in a state of fragility and susceptibility—represents a fundamental aspect of their duty. Their goal is to nurture these young individuals into well-informed, constructive members of society.

From a professional standpoint, educational administrators are expected to foster environments that support the ongoing professional development of teachers. Ethically, they must cultivate a workplace characterized by trust and sincerity, ensuring that teachers feel valued and respected. Legally, it is crucial for administrators to uphold and protect teachers' rights and entitlements (Starratt, 2004). Administrators are tasked with aligning their role with the broader social order, adapting its principles to fit the specific context of the school (Fullan, 2004). The school environment should facilitate professional collaboration and trust between teachers and administrators (Barnett & Fallon, 2007).

The findings from this study indicated that participating school principals tended to prioritize legal responsibilities over other dimensions of their role, such as professional and ethical obligations. They managed with the resources available to them and place significant emphasis on maintaining the organizational structure crucial for effective human resource management both within the school and in interactions beyond it. However, the results also suggested that instructional leadership—critical for teacher development and support—was often overlooked or inadequately addressed by principals. This neglect can lead to an environment where the focus on creating a supportive learning and teaching atmosphere is diminished by pressing structural and material challenges (Aslanargun, 2016).

Furthermore, the study highlighted a need for greater attention to the psychological and social factors that underlied communication issues within schools. Effective management requires not only addressing these elements but also recognizing the importance of social capital in fostering a conducive school environment. Future researches should investigate these areas to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how school leaders can better navigate and resolve the complex issues they face, ultimately enhancing the overall educational experience for students and staff alike.

Recommendations

In consistent with the results obtained, following suggestions can be put forward:

Financial resources for schools and financial transparency to address budgetary constraints should be improved

Adequate resources and personnel for school maintenance to ensure a healthy learning environment should be allocated

Professional development programs for school leaders on leadership, crisis management, and effective communication should be put into action.

Effective communication and collaboration mechanisms among teachers, parents, and other stakeholders should be strengthened

Leadership approaches that enhance school culture and staff engagement should be supported.

Psychological counseling and social support services within schools should be enhanced.

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Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.

Author Contributions

Ramazan Burak Kahyaoğlu: Conceptualization, data curation, investigation, methodology, writing original draft, review & editing

Kenan Yavuz: Data Collection, review & editing

Bülent Uludağ: Data Collection, review & editing

Halil Bayar: Data Collection, review & editing

Declaration of Competing Interest

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Ethics approval

In the writing process of the study titled “**Challenges faced by school administrators in school management**”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the authors of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data. “Journal Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER] and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, and all responsibility belongs to the authors and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

Institutional review board (IRB) approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this research was obtained from Akdeniz University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting of 17 decision numbered 375 on September 10th, 2024.

Data Availability Statement

Anonymised data from this study can be made available on request from burakcan0071985@gmail.com

Education problems faced by parents of international students in Turkey

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Abstract. This study aimed to identify the problems parents of foreign citizens in Turkey faced when receiving general education and to provide suggestions for their solution. This study used a qualitative research method, a holistic pattern of multiple states, and an easily accessible sample of states. The study's working group consisted of 10 parents of students aged 6 to 11 years old with foreign nationals in the 2020-2021 academic year in public schools in the provincial center of Antalya. The research data was collected using a semi-structured interview form and analyzed using descriptive and content analysis. As a result of the study, parents of foreign citizens expressed their opinions about the insufficient number of Turkish lessons, language problems, adaptation, problems of communication between parents and teachers, and problems of school management with parents. The proposals of foreign parents to solve the problems that arise during education first explain the preparation for the Turkish language for foreign students or its provision in October as an additional course.

Keywords: Elementary school, foreign student, international students, parents

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Introduction

International migration is developing rapidly every day in a globalizing world. Along with free migration, forced migration of countries for political and social reasons also largely occurs. In general, migration is the separation from the geographical and social-cultural environment and settling in another geographical and social-cultural environment (Durugönül, 1997). According to Koçak & Terzi (2012), migration is defined in various sources as a geographical, social, and cultural displacement movement that may result in repatriation or permanent settlement of individuals individually or as a family, depending on several reasons, for their own volition or compulsion. On the other hand, the concept of migration can be described as a social mobility as much as the displacement of people and groups of people individually or en masse is a demographic mobility. Because migration is a multidimensional event, it also brings legal, educational, cultural, and psychological problems (Tezcan, 2000). The most basic factor at the root of the migration phenomenon is that individuals go to more favorable places to make a living economically and settle in a new place by taking advantage of the opportunities here. We can say that the decrease in the importance of the borders between countries after the Cold War and the facilitation of transportation and communication with the developing technology era caused the international migration problem to progress more. At the same time, migration policy and immigration administration worldwide have started to follow different paths. Even if customs controls are maintained at the highest level in the era of advanced technology, uncontrolled migration is observed in many countries. For example, the Mexican and US borders are among the most stringent border controls: high and durable wires, high-end control devices, high lighting devices, night vision cameras, and human tracking devices (Nevins, 2002). A similar situation is observed at the European Union territories' borders, especially at the Strait of Gibraltar and the phase borders with Spain. At the same time, the new players in migration control, air companies, have also taken on the task of verifying and confirming the passengers' right to travel to their destination (Guiraudon &

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Joppke, 2001). No matter how strong the border control is, the number of illegal immigrants is still very high, even if countries harden their domestic policies against legal and illegal immigrants and, in many cases, even send them back to their countries. However, sending back incoming migrants should only be applied in special situations such as armed conflict and war. Still, today, it is becoming a situation that countries often use (Schuster, 2004).

Migration is divided into classes according to the causes of the species. In general, if we divide them into permanent and temporary migration, both are seen in high numbers at the borders of Turkey. Especially for migrants who use Turkey as a transfer country, their stay in Turkey is getting longer, as it has become difficult for them to cross to Europe legally and illegally in recent years. Therefore, many migrations that are determined to be temporary become permanent. At the same time, immigrants from other countries are temporarily named in the registration and stay in the country with a residence permit. Still, the number of foreigners who stay for ten or twenty years by extending their residence permit when it expires is not tiny. July 19, 2024, according to the data published by TUIK, when we look at the incoming migrant age group, we can see that the group between the ages of 0-20 is superior. Therefore, one of immigrants' biggest problems is covering this age group. As it turns out, education is the most important problem for the group between the ages of 0 and 20. Therefore, one of immigrants' biggest problems is covering this age group. As it turns out, the most important problem of the group between the ages of 0-20 is education.

One of the important turning points in terms of immigrant education in Turkey was admitted to the European Union in 1999, and the most important obstacle in front of it was the "migration" policy. For this reason, the government has carried out extensive research on this issue, and studies have been carried out to answer the problem of how migration management can be managed; in the partnership document signed between Turkey and the Council of Europe in 2001, Turkey stated its goals on migration management as follows.

1. "To prevent illegal migration, the adoption and implementation of EU Legislation and practices on migration (admission, readmission, deportation)."
2. "Improving the capacity of public administration for the adoption, implementation, and administration of the Acquis, especially through education, including the development of effective border controls to prevent illegal migration and illegal human and drug trafficking, ensuring appropriate coordination between ministries (Law on Foreigners and International Protection, 2013)."

Today, many studies and arrangements are being made in Turkey regarding education for foreigners. However, compared to developed countries, it is still insufficient. One of the biggest problems with education for foreigners is language. Turkish lessons are insufficient or even absent for foreigners, especially in public schools. Another problem is integration. The integration process of newly arrived foreign students has been very long and difficult.

While conducting our study, the number of migrants arriving in Turkey from both Ukraine and Russia increased after Russia's attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In particular, the region where we conducted the study (Antalya, Konyaalti) has become the region that receives the most migration. This situation has increased the value of our work even more.

Methodology

We have chosen a qualitative research method, a descriptive phenomenological design, based on interpretive paradigm (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018). The phenomenological design emphasises on topics that are known but require in-depth and detailed investigation based on perspectives and opinions of people what experienced (Polkinghorne,1989). We aimed to identify the problems parents of foreign citizens in Turkey faces when receiving general education and to provide suggestions for their solution based on the perspectives and experiences of participants.

Sampling

The working group was formed by the parents of 10 foreign students between the ages of 6 and 11 who were educated in public schools in Konyaalti district in Antalya province in Turkey from Dec. 2020 to 2021. The appropriate sampling method was selected to provide ease of access to the participants, and they were not asked their opinions on the subject before the interview. All 10 foreign parents participating in the study are women.

Data collection

In a qualitative study, participants are asked open-ended questions so that they can formulate their experiences without being limited by the researcher's point of view or the results of previous research (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the research data was obtained using semi-structured open interview forms. The questions asked to the participants were prepared after a literature review and verification by two experts. A pilot interview was conducted with 2 participants to pre-edit the questions and make corrections. All participants spoke Russian, so the questions were translated into Russian, and they were consulted and confirmed by a Russian grammar specialist to confirm that the translation was clear and understandable to the participants.

Ethics statement

The ethics committee approval of this research was obtained from the Social Sciences Ethics Committee of Akdeniz University at the 18th decision meeting dated December 13, 2023, numbered 420. In accordance with scientific research ethics, an informed consent form was taken from the participants before the interview, and code letters were used instead of their real names because the parents of the students participating in the study wanted their names to be kept confidential. Since the parents' language participating in the search is Russian, an expert linguist translated the approval form into Russian and presented it to the participants.

Data analysis

After the interview, the recorded audio files were translated from Russian into Turkish and transcribed verbatim using NVIVO 10 software and then analyzed using thematic, descriptive, and content analysis methods (Kelle, 1995; Cohen, Mansion, and Morrison, 2007; Gunbayi, 2018). The results obtained because of thematic, descriptive, and content analysis were understood and interpreted.

Findings

The foreign national parents who participated in our research were asked about the problems they faced. Of the 10 foreign parents participating in the study, three foreign parents stated that they did not have any problems. In comparison, two foreign parents said that they only had some language problems in the first periods and no longer had any problems. The remaining five foreign national parents explained that they were experiencing some problems, and their opinions were collected in 4 categories. The first category is insufficient Turkish courses, the language problem, the second category is the problem of adaptation, the third category is the teacher communication problem with the parent, and the last category is the school management communication problem with the parent.

In our study, when we studied the opinions of parents of international students regarding the adaptation challenges faced by these parents were the most significant, at 50%. Five out of ten foreign parents reported experiencing difficulties. The opinions of the participants are presented below.

The problem of adaptation has been challenging for us. As I mentioned before, when we first arrived, my child was excluded from the classroom, and there was even an incident involving another child. For instance, I still notice that every time I go to pick up my child from school, foreign students always form a separate group; they consistently stay on the sidelines. In summary, the first two years were very difficult for us (KT 1, 1).

At first, yes, we had a little problem because I also didn't have Turkish at the same time. I was able to say the first half. Because when I was in the first grade, my child was the only foreign student in the class. I think if extra Turkish is given, the adaptation problem will be solved in schools. For example, when we first started school, we had a lot of arguments with other children. Because they also rightfully did not understand my child. Of course, there were arguments because ours didn't understand either, but luckily for my class teacher, he would step in and solve problems very well on this issue. That's why we didn't have any big problems (KT2.4).

Yes, we had problems adapting. We didn't know different cultures, different people, or language, but it passed (KT.3).

We had problems adapting. Besides, she didn't want to go to class, she couldn't talk to anyone during recess. After all, the child wants to play with someone who understands the language, he wants to talk. But I can say that we solved it in the second half of the year (KT.4).

We knew Turkish when we moved here, but we had some adaptation problems due to place and culture differences, but it didn't last long (KT.5).

Next, as you can see from the opinions of foreign student parents about adaptation problems among the problems they face, Turkish lessons are not sufficient or there is a language problem. Turkish lessons are insufficient for foreigners according to 4 foreign parents of the participants and newly arrived foreign students should be able to take extra Turkish lessons at the school.

When we first arrived, my child did not know Turkish. We used to sit together and study from books; it was very difficult with my child; he cried a lot and did not understand anything. Of course, it passed, because children learn quickly. The only thing that upset me was that no one from the school tried to help and even got angry at us, saying, "If you don't speak Turkish, why do you live here?" For example, there is a girl in my son's class who does not speak Turkish at all and does not understand it at all. One day, a science teacher yelled at the girl, "You don't understand anything, how am I going to teach you how to do it?" I mean, teachers can also be very harsh and ill-mannered. Every day I ask, how was your day, what did you do? So, I see (page 1).

I think the biggest problem for international students starting their studies in Turkey should be the language. We've had some hard times too. It didn't take long to learn Turkish, because our father speaks Turkish at home, but some children go to school without fully knowing Turkish, and I know many such families. One day, while waiting for my son to leave the classroom, I heard an elderly Russian lady say to her grandson, "If you don't understand anything at all, just sit down, what should we do?" Thus, the child will sit in class, not understanding anything (KT4).

In their opinions about the communication problem between the parents of a foreign student and the school administration, 2 participants stated that there are problems with the school administration.

Let me explain our communication with the school administration with an example, one day my child did not come from school, it was past the time. I was very curious, I went to school and there they told me, your child is in the principal's room. There have been some incidents. When I said why didn't you let me know. We don't have your phone, they approached you with an accusatory attitude, saying that you didn't give it, but we give you a contact number every year, even I write and give it with my own hands (KT 1).

I can say that we have no communication with the school administration at all. When my child has problems with other students, the classroom teacher talks to us while the school principal talks to the parents of those students. The reason is that we are strangers (KT 2).

Discussion and Conclusion

We can say that globalization has also accelerated with the easing of communication and transportation in recent years. However, one of the biggest problems in the world is the education and integration of foreign students. Different education systems are being implemented in various countries in this regard. Different methods are observed, especially in countries with a very high migration rate. Because it has been seen that students' academic achievements are low due to their native languages and cultural differences, they cannot adapt to the education system, they do not attend activity and skill classes, they have difficulty understanding, they do not fulfill assignments and responsibilities (Polat, 2017). While immigrant families struggle to adapt to the social and cultural environment in the country they came from; children must adapt to the new socio-cultural environment and the school system in this environment (Nar, 2008).

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has four basic needs and rights: "life, participation, protection, and development". Every child has needs such as nutrition, sleep, ability to move, and protection since birth. However, the child's right to education has also been defined as a fundamental right and it has been requested that all children in the countries that are parties to this agreement benefit from these rights equally (Gencer, 2017). However, in many countries, education is still not offered to everyone on equal terms. All foreign students in Turkey have the right to receive education. However, there are no programs that will facilitate the adaptation processes of foreign students. One of the most important problems is the problem of foreign students not knowing the language.

We have tried to identify these problems in our research. As a result of the interviews conducted with foreign parents during the study, it was revealed that the biggest problem of students is adaptation. During the interview, it was revealed that foreign students do not know Turkish at the root of the adaptation problem. Because Turkish preparatory courses are not offered in foreign student education planning in Turkey, however, it has been seen that language preparatory classes for foreign students who do not master this language of education make the adaptation of children very easy. For example, this application gives good results in Germany and in many European countries. At the same time, compulsory Turkish education should be provided for foreigners in kindergartens and primary schools; there should be certain hours. Such practices are being implemented in many countries for children and adults, thus addressing the problem of integration and adaptation. For example, the Ministry of Migration and Administration of the Russian Federation is preparing a law for applying language exams for residence permits and work permits for foreigners, and according to preliminary studies, children of foreign families will thus be more successful in learning the local language. Other problems faced by foreign parents during the study were the problems of communication between the parent and the school and the school administration. According to the opinions of the participants, the approach of the school administration and the teacher towards foreign parents may be different from time to time. For example, one participant's opinion (KT 2): "Actually, I can say that we have no communication with the school administration at all. When my child has problems with other students, the classroom teacher talks to us while the school principal talks to the parents of those students. The reason is that we are strangers". Such situations should not be experienced to increase the positive approach of both parent and student about the school. The communication and communication mechanism should be the same for all students. For this reason, different approaches should be followed to solve the problem of communication with foreign parents and foreign students in this regard.

According to the World Migration Report (2022), 281 million people live in a country other than their country of birth in 2020, and according to the 1990 report, this decade has seen an increase of 128 million. For this reason, if we assume that this number will increase many times in the coming years, the problem of integration and adaptation of foreign students will certainly take an important place in education all over the world.

Due to Turkey's geographical location has always been a country that hosts people of different nationalities. Recently, the number of foreign national immigrants has been growing rapidly throughout

the country due to political reasons in some countries bordering Turkey. At the same time, Turkey's climatic conditions and natural riches attract the attention of people worldwide and lead to the idea of permanent settlement. For this reason, some system changes need to be made for foreign students in terms of education. The fact that foreign students are successful in education, easily integrated, and undergo a rapid adaptation process shows that foreign students play an important role in ensuring social and economic development for countries hosting foreign immigrants, as well as rights and law, gender equality in society in general (Omlechenko, 2018).

We can emphasize that in recent years, only asylum seekers from Syria have remained on the agenda, while migrant children from other countries have been ignored. For this reason, while focusing on the educational process of migrant children, who seem to be too numerous, we should take some concrete steps by considering the place and problem of migrant children who are being found in our country in the education system, considering the reforms made in other countries. New models must be produced. We can see that certain foreign students are the majority in some regions. As a result of the beginning and continuation of the Russian-Ukrainian war since the beginning of the year, the number of migrants from these two countries is increasing day by day in Antalya province, and it is known that Ukrainians who emigrated to Europe at the beginning of the war have started migrating from Europe to Turkey in recent months because they see it as more advantageous in terms of housing and finding a job. The prolongation of the war and the excessive material and moral damage to the territory of Ukraine indicate a prolongation of the return processes of incoming Ukrainian migrants. For this reason, the issue we are dealing with is considered one of the current issues of the Turkish Education System.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of our study, several key issues have been identified regarding the challenges faced by foreign national parents of international students in Turkey. To improve the educational experience of these students and their families, the following recommendations are proposed:

Enhancing Turkish Language Support

- Schools should offer additional and more comprehensive Turkish language courses for international students, especially in their initial years of schooling.
- A dedicated language support program should be implemented, including intensive Turkish language classes and tutoring sessions.
- Specialized teachers or teaching assistants proficient in multiple languages should be assigned to assist non-Turkish-speaking students.

Improving Adaptation Support Programs

- Schools should develop structured orientation programs for international students and their parents to facilitate smoother cultural and academic integration.
- Peer mentoring programs can be introduced where local students assist international students in adapting to the school environment.
- Extracurricular activities should be designed to encourage interaction between local and international students, fostering friendships and reducing social exclusion.

Strengthening Teacher-Parent Communication

- Teachers should receive training on cross-cultural communication and sensitivity to better understand and support international students and their families.
- Regular meetings between teachers and foreign parents should be scheduled to discuss the progress and well-being of international students.
- Bilingual communication tools, such as translated newsletters and digital platforms with multilingual support, should be introduced to bridge language gaps between parents and teachers.

Enhancing Communication Between Parents and School Administration

- Schools should establish a clear communication protocol to ensure that parents are promptly informed of any issues concerning their children.
- A designated school liaison officer for international students should be appointed to address concerns and facilitate communication between parents and school administrators.
- A multilingual school helpline or parent support group should be set up to assist foreign parents in understanding school policies and procedures.

Creating an Inclusive and Supportive School Environment

- Schools should implement anti-discrimination policies and awareness campaigns to prevent exclusion and promote diversity.
- Teachers should be encouraged to use inclusive teaching strategies that consider the needs of non-Turkish-speaking students.
- Schools should provide psychological and social support services to assist international students who struggle with adaptation issues.

By implementing these recommendations, schools in Turkey can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for international students and their parents, leading to better educational outcomes and a more harmonious school experience for all.

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Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.

Author Contributions

Zhyldyz Akunova: Conceptualization, data curation, investigation, methodology, writing original draft, review & editing

Süleyman Karataş: Data Collection, review & editing

Declaration of Competing Interest

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Ethics approval

In the writing process of the study titled “**Education problems faced by parents of international students in Turkey**”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the authors of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data. “Journal Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER] and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, and all responsibility belongs to the authors and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

Institutional review board (IRB) approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this research was obtained from Akdeniz University Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting of 18 decision numbered 420 on December 13th ,2023.

Data Availability Statement

Anonymized data from this study can be made available on request from cildizakunova@gmail.com.

An autoethnographic case for social entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism

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Abstract. In this article, the author autoethnographically describes, discusses, and reflects on the process of becoming a professional in tourism based on her social entrepreneurial journey. Through the eyes of a woman social entrepreneur, she evaluates the experiences she has gained in her personal journey involving sustainable tourism practices within a sustainable life philosophy. On this basis, she tries to reveal what challenges and opportunities she faces in meeting the criteria for sustainable tourism and what is considered sustainable by local people, operators, and public institutions. Her experiences during her social entrepreneurial journey will inspire those who wish to undertake similar endeavors and help them to be ready for similar challenges they will face.

Keywords: Sustainability, social entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurship, alternative tourism, autoethnography

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My focus has always been on achieving excellence and success in my endeavors. My goals were not centered on the amount of money I could make, as status or financial gain. Perhaps due to the influence of having parents who were teachers and growing up around educators, I prioritized values such as being a good person, honesty, ethics, putting others before self, learning, doing the right thing and always questioning. A good university degree has given me a range of skills and knowledge that have opened up new opportunities for my career. Many alumni of my university have achieved great success as business leaders and managers, both nationally and internationally. A year after graduating, I got married. It was a time when banks were recruiting a lot of people from different departments. By the time I graduated, the 'Asian crisis' had begun to affect the economy, leading to a reduction in bank recruitment. I was very enthusiastic about entrepreneurship and didn't want to be a banker anyway, but my family thought it was a good career for me. I began to hear the social whispers that are always in women's ears in one way or another. What were they? "A woman adapts her work to that of her husband. She finds jobs that allow her to balance her time between work and home. In Türkiye, there is a common belief that women are naturally better suited to jobs that involve social interaction and caring, while men are better suited to jobs that require strength, analytical or managerial skills (Levanon & Grusky, 2016). From a young age, girls are taught that acceptable jobs involve caring and supporting roles, both within the family and in society. Occupational choices and gender-based preferences for different jobs are identified early in life due to the influence of the social environment (Alksnis et al., 2008). My situation was not different from many other women whose husbands were officers. I had to choose a profession that would allow me to be transferred to the place where my husband was stationed. Over the following years, I met many women in similar situations who were unable to work in their own profession or were not working at all. At the time, this did not seem abnormal to me. Women were primarily responsible for childcaring and housework. The association of women mainly with care-related activities, such as housework, childcare, patient care, and education of children, has led to doubts about their ability to perform successfully in other areas of the workforce, particularly in managerial positions (Cuberes and

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Teignier, 2016). Due to the fact that the man's job was the determining factor in the family's livelihood and the societal norm of men working outside the home, women's success in their careers, earning high salaries, and working long hours seemed meaningless. Although working women were valued, they were not expected to overcome obstacles and go beyond traditional women's work. I have witnessed many women I have worked with who fit this description. "Gentlemen" expect women to be caring and ethical at work, and if they behave appropriately, they are rewarded with warmth and attention. Employees expect their female colleagues to be caring and ethical at work, and if they behave appropriately, they are rewarded with warmth and attention. It is known that if women are too demanding or assertive, for example, if they ask for change or promotion, they may lose the support of their managers, which can make work difficult and lead to ostracism (Madsen et al., 2020). Despite graduating from a prestigious university or having many goals in mind, the reality is that this is what occurred. You are forced to make a choice. It is as if it is only a woman's job to balance home life and work life. Moreover, you experience this even when you have a husband like me who is ready to help you in everything. Here, as I repeat, the subject is summarized once again; "helping"... Housework is the woman's responsibility, and the man helps, at best. In my neighborhood, there is a traditional view that the home is the woman's domain, but this is not necessarily the case. Women are capable of managing both home and work, and it is important to challenge gender stereotypes that limit their opportunities. Domestic responsibilities are often culturally imposed on women, leading to a perception that housework is solely their responsibility. These jobs are lower in terms of pay, prestige and workplace demands, but without overtime, travel, mobility, inflexible work schedules and unsocial working hours. For all these reasons, women are more concerned with work-life balance than men (OECD, 2017). In fact, when I was a new graduate, I had ideas of starting a business such as establishing a house cleaning company or providing professional apartment management services to apartment buildings, which were not very common at that time. When my father saw these companies years later, he reminded me, "İşil, you told me that, but I find it illogical and laughed to you." It was not an environment where women entrepreneurs were provided with many opportunities, training, and finance. I accepted the offer to work of a private bank in city of İzmir, where my husband already is working. However, I was also concerned about signing a contract for three years. I worried that I would be unable to leave during this period due to the compensation fee. At that moment, I questioned my abilities and wondered what other career paths I could pursue. Moreover, the bank I worked for was the best in the country, so why should I leave? That's why I continued to work and three years later I started working in the Intelligence and Financial Analysis Department, considered the most difficult department to work in the bank, where I examined the financial analyses of the biggest companies of the bank. Meanwhile, the pressures of family and my biological clock were telling me that it was time to have a child. I worked in this department more than ten years, during which time I became a mother. Following the closure of the department, I started to work in the corporate branch. Two years later I had the opportunity to establish and operate a new branch in Kosovo. It was best working years of my carrier although I had many abnormal situations at work. I have also faced the challenges of balancing my personal and professional life while living alone with my child because none of my family member came together with me. Throughout this experience, I encountered different obstacles that women often face in their career development. These barriers range from being rooted in traditional attitudes about women's and men's roles in society and the family to include (1) reluctance to recruit, train and develop women or promote them to higher levels, (2) organizational shadow barriers such as the Glass Ceiling (invisible and artificial barriers that restrict women from being promoted regardless of their qualifications or achievements) or the Sticky Floor (restricting women's mobility in the workplace and not allowing them to succeed.), (3) lack of institutional practices that ensure work-life balance, (4) insensitivity of organizations to women with family or caring responsibilities, and (5) insufficient investment in the development of women with leadership potential (Vallone Mitchell, 2000).

The bank may appear to be a pleasant place for women to work from the outside, but it is your home that you always neglect, the place that you leave at eight in the morning and enter at eight in the evening, how much can it be yours? In developing countries like mine, where patriarchal relations are firmly entrenched, men believe they have the natural right to rule. In societies where men have a dominant role, it is difficult for women to challenge this. Therefore, individuals attempt to cooperate and adapt to the situation, even if they do not wish to do so. However, many women become dissatisfied with the situation by the time they reach their 30s and move on to new careers, children or lifestyles (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). On the one hand, having a perfect home and raising your children the way you want to can be very demanding while continuing to work. Women who cook the next day's dinner at ten o'clock at night, women who leave their children with their parents on weekdays, women who beg the babysitter, "I'll be back in an hour, can you please stay a little longer?", women who drop their children off at school with tears in their eyes and women bankers are always the last ones to pick up their children from the school. Childbirth is a significant event in a woman's life. Many women choose to take a break from their careers for an extended period, or even permanently. Additionally, due to their preference for family and home life, some women not to pursue higher management positions that entail greater pressure and stress (Dozier et al., 2007). Despite working in the best bank in the country, there were still many things we touched but we did not know how or why to demand change. Despite numerous policies and strategies to promote gender equality, significant inequalities persist, and projections suggest that they will continue for decades (Perrons, 2017). In the bank where I worked, women could be managers, but the success score in the management exams was set at 70 points for men and 90 for women. This meant that even if a woman achieved the same success score as a man, she would not be able to become a manager due to the limiting quota for women. Positive discrimination was not a factor in this situation. The three general factors most often cited to explain gender inequality in the workplace are historical and institutional factors (culture), employers' preferences (often referred to as "discrimination") and employees' preferences. At the bank where I worked, this practice was implemented at every stage. Although we, as women, were aware of it, we did not voice our concerns for various reasons (England, 2000). While male colleagues could easily leave their homes and children and move out of the province, work for two years and return, most of the female colleagues I saw doing this were either divorced or had to return to their families by giving up their titles. Although we were angry about this at the time, it was not an issue we could resist. There is a significant body of research on the challenges and barriers faced by women in the workplace, and while progress is being made, it remains a fact that the business world is still male-dominated and has not yet achieved a structure that allows for a healthy work-life balance. The pressure on women to balance work and home responsibilities while men are encouraged to focus solely on work remains a significant issue. Women's double burden of paid work and unpaid work, such as housework and childcare, poses a major obstacle to career development. Women are forced to work much more than men (Eurofond, 2018). I worked non-stop until I got lymphoma, I could not find to the problems I encountered in business life or the distress of not being able to do what I wanted. With the help of top medical care, I underwent over a year of chemotherapy and successfully beat the disease. During my recovery period, my family and I decided to relocate to a small coastal town where we now reside in a beautiful house with a garden. For the first time in my life, I saw the stars clearly. I have also planted trees and grown vegetables, and I am now a proud owner of a cats (Oggi, Lilly) and a dog (Mars). Furthermore, my son has started cycling to school. He loved his English, math and social studies teachers in the village school so much that he would talk about her even years later. Contrary to the common beliefs that the best schools are private schools, the most successful teachers are in big schools, that children should always study, that education at school is never enough and should always be reinforced, he was studying staying more in nature, spending a lot of time freely with his friends, calmly, without having rush in the traffic while going to school or coming back to home. Listening to the lectures in class with pleasure was enough for his academic success, and in the meantime, he had acquired various rural skills such as planting trees, hoeing the soil, sanding, cleaning pomegranates quickly, and carving trees. Sing (2014) states that children today spend an average of one

hour a day outside, compared to three hours in their grandparents' generation. Adams (2012) also points out that children spend one day a week on the couch and only two and a half hours outside. In the past, it was common for children to come home from school, drop their bags, and immediately go outside to play in the street or garden. The current technological age is highly commercialized, encouraging children to sit in front of screens more and more, which reduces learning experiences outside the classroom. Those concerned about the rapid decline of play as a defining feature of childhood have begun to demand that schools should teach children how to play. Observing this made me think, "Why shouldn't all children have this experience? Why shouldn't they be exposed to a learning space away from the stereotypes of their parents and society?" The decline in outdoor play can be attributed to several factors, including parental overprotectiveness, the decreasing availability of playgrounds, and the increasing attraction of technology. I couldn't bring all children to village schools, but I could offer them an alternative to holiday villages with water slides. Couldn't something new be learned in the time period we call holiday? Would a holiday full of learning and new experiences be tiring and boring or would it be more relaxing? And wouldn't creating such a holiday destination satisfy my entrepreneurial feelings that I had been dreaming of for years and my desire to do a social work that would benefit people, which I didn't know at the time was called social entrepreneurship. It is a common assumption that the primary motivation behind working and starting a business is financial gain. However, it is important to acknowledge that women entrepreneurs may face internal obstacles such as fear, insecurity, and a sense of scarcity, which can limit their ability to make positive changes in both their personal and professional lives (Linan et al., 2022). Would we work if we didn't have to earn money? In fact, let's remember the question that is the popular job selection criterion of recent times. If you didn't have to earn money, what job would you want to do? If we don't work to make money, then what will we work for? Or can the work we do to make money also make us happy? And what makes people happy other than just profit, other than just making money? Why do we seek meaningful work? Are we happier and more productive in work that is meaningful to us? Was I crazy? Was I going to quit my job at the bank when I was a senior, And I was earning so much money, and despite many disadvantages, including the loss of many benefits such as the ability to use a private hospital? Yes I would! I gathered all my courage and resigned. I was going to do something healthier and more useful, something in nature, something that was good for me and others. Work that is good for children, work that is good for society. I was going to work, but I was not going to have to put up with life passing me by while I worked. I was going to work, but I was going to have a balance between my home and my work. I was going to do something in the open air that was good for others and myself. I thought that work was important in life, but that it was important to work to produce, not to consume, and that being close to nature and exchanging with other living beings would be good for everyone, especially for young people who learn these things at an early age.

Milton Friedman famously stated that the sole purpose of business is to make a profit (Aune, 2007). However, advocates of sustainable development argue that businesses should also benefit society, protect the environment and maintain harmony with their employees and stakeholders (Colglazier, 2015). It is important for individuals to pursue economic gain and start new ventures. However, business choices and company establishment should not be based solely on financial gain. Personal interests, competencies, and values should also be taken into consideration. Even if one does not own a business or work in a traditional workplace, job satisfaction and enthusiasm are often linked to alignment with personal values and interests. Questions such as 'Do companies that provide meaning to employees' lives generate more profit?' and 'Does this lead to longer employee retention?' have been raised (Pattnaik and Jena, 2020). Additionally, inquiries into the origins of 'Benefit Cooperations' and the attitudes of workers towards socially and environmentally beneficial workplaces have emerged. The ESG concept has sparked academic and business discussions about the relationship between companies and their employees. The questions I asked myself before I started researching, reading and writing about sustainability. Doing something I really want to do, finding a balance between work and social life...

Unfortunately, we are all either not lucky enough to prioritize these things or we have not organized our lives financially enough to prioritize them. So, the bottom line is that it comes back to the economy first (Wood et al., 2020; Gragnano et al., 2020).

We do not live in harmony with nature. Perhaps it is challenging to comprehend and adopt such a lifestyle after a certain age. However, having this sensitivity at a young age can make a significant difference. My intention was to establish an environment where young individuals could enjoy themselves with their peers in a natural setting, learn about nature through experience, and develop a desire to protect nature independently. Although I am not an educator and have not previously worked in this field, I am passionate about the idea of allowing others to experience the healing power of nature by being close to trees, plants, soil, animals, and gaining new outdoor skills. I conducted research to determine how and where I could achieve this goal, including using my own garden, starting from scratch on new land, or renting a suitable location. I came across Nature Village Olympos (NVO), an ecological project that had already been established. The owners were committed to constructing NVO in harmony with nature and the traditional culture of the region. However, they already had other jobs and were considering what to do with the ageing facility that was not profitable enough due to its high operating costs. NVO was a resort with just 8 bungalows, a pool and a restaurant, set in 50 acres of woodland. And that was it. One of the partners, a German national who had worked as a director on German cruise ships, could only be in Olympos for a few months a year, and the people he had hired to run the business, despite their high salaries, could not cope with both the dilapidated resort and the customers. In our first meeting with him, which lasted over four hours, I told him that I would not leave until he allowed me to carry out my project in this facility and we agreed on a three-year contract. I would run the business, I would do my projects, I would pay no rent and if we made more money than I spent I would get a share of the profits. I got to work straight away. I couldn't believe how well everything was going, it was almost too good not to be true. I had found a place that was exactly what I wanted, the owner and I got on very well and we agreed on a price that we could afford. Now all I had to do was make my dreams come true.

NVO was located on 52 acres of land and only 2 acres were built on, consisting of eight wooden (cedar) bungalows of 25 square meters each. The common area of 200 square meters was woven from original goat's wool as a nomadic tent to keep the culture of the region alive. The roofs of the bungalows were also covered with woven goat's wool and there were no other buildings except for 1 restaurant, a reception and staff room and a house.

The facility required extensive renovation and cleaning due to a lack of maintenance. Therefore, general maintenance and repair activities were planned. The felt material on the roofs of all bungalows was replaced, and the bungalows were painted. Additionally, the wooden floors were thoroughly cleaned. A walking path was constructed around the pool. The air conditioners and all areas were cleaned, and the trees in the garden were pruned.

Finding employees was a significant challenge. Two friends in their final year of high school applied for work. Although I only had room for one person, they insisted on working together and offered to work for a lower price than usual in exchange for food and accommodation. They were surprised when we provided them with insurance. They had been working since middle school and had even worked outside of the province as seasonal workers. However, they had never had insurance until now. This was their first time working in such a facility, and it was during the COVID-19 pandemic. They attended hygiene training, and I explained to them how to perform each task especially housekeeping and created

checklists for each job. Using a checklist was particularly effective for cleaning. They also created a work plan based on their preferences.

While the renovations were going on, we had a meeting with a gymnastics club manager who was looking for a place to run a summer camp, but he wanted a place by the sea, but we were in the forest. I inquired about the activities they would engage in during the camp, and he mentioned training in the morning and evening, with swimming during the rest of the day. I shared my vision for the camp, explaining that it was specifically designed for this purpose and suggested various activities for the students to participate in between training sessions. We proposed activities such as bead making, jewelry making, macramé, wood printing, stone painting, bocchia (Italian bowling on grass), and feeding animals, which the coach was very interested in. The only thing missing was a grassy playground. We initially did not plan to have a lawn due to the associated costs of irrigation and maintenance. However, we did not want to miss out on the camp, so we agreed to build a lawn around the pool. During the first camp, the facility was at full capacity, and unfortunately, there were several mishaps. The refrigerator cable caught fire while 30 people were eating. Fortunately, we managed to fix it without anyone getting hurt and without causing any disruption to the guests. In the first camp, we ensured that everyone left happy by serving three-time meals during the day, completing all activities on time, and ensuring that everyone was completely full. One of the families was delighted enough to plan a three-day meeting with the mothers of their older daughter's friends after the camp. The new camp began on the same day that the previous one ended, exceeding my expectations.

During our first season, we provided both camps and standard accommodation services. At the same time, we made significant progress in operating the facility. We prepared our meals using healthy, natural ingredients, avoiding packaged and ready-made foods. We purchased ingredients as if we were shopping for them at home and cooked them like a homemade meal. We once bought cheese that was so fatty and of such high quality that it melted like butter when we cut. The butcher was amazed that I had bought lean ground beef for meatballs instead of the chicken, fatty meat, and bread meatballs made by other hostels. We made all the food we could ourselves, such as jam, olives, and bread. We bought the rest from local vendors. We separated our garbage into organic and non-organic. We composted the organic waste in a designated area and collected plastic, paper, and other waste separately. I made an agreement with a waste oil company to pick up our waste oil. We purchased our greens from a local producer. We provided dispensers throughout the facility with water sourced from a nearby natural spring. The only packaged product we sold was ice cream.

We disinfected our pool using minimal chemicals and more salt, which is the best solution for both swimmers and the environment. To clean the rooms, we used a steam machine instead of chemicals to preserve the beautiful cedar smell. Additionally, our cleaning staff, who were young men, found it easier to wipe everywhere with the machine, even though cleaning is often considered a woman's job.

The facility had four bicycles, which we repaired and renewed. We encouraged those staying in the facility to use them for free.

During my time at NVO, my goal was to provide guests with a holiday experience in a natural and protected environment that encourages physical activity and self-reflection. I aimed to inspire guests to consider their consumption habits and daily practices, and to connect with others who share similar values. Through simple measures that anyone can adopt, I demonstrated the significant impact that small changes can make.

Upon arriving at NVO for the first time, I was amazed by the sight of the solar panels. It was a dream come true to see a facility generating electricity from the sun. However, it soon became apparent that

generating electricity and feeding the plant was challenging due to legal procedures. The system was installed by a German company, but they were unable to obtain sufficient consultancy on permits and licenses, leading them to leave after making it operational. The system did not register electricity production, and it was more expensive to operate than to not operate. We consulted with companies, planned our next steps, and began the process of obtaining legal permits. As expected, we encountered many obstacles. The legislation was only intended for new systems, leaving uncertainty on how to legalize existing ones. When we approached institutions for guidance, we were advised to build a new system instead of dealing with the old one. Despite this, we persisted and made progress. The authorities inspected the NVO multiple times and documented the system to register it. However, we were unable to obtain a simple letter from the municipality confirming that the solar panels were installed on the building. As a result, we were unable to use the panels.

Before I started the business, The NVO owner said that the accountant was very attentive and kept the accounts of the company very well. The accountant was involved in contract negotiations and consulted on almost everything. However, after I began operating the plant, I discovered that the accountant was receiving almost double the market rate for his services, and he was being paid for a year in advance. Additionally, tax payments were often made late. He told me that the procedures for paying taxes and insurance were complicated. I noticed that he had previously transferred the money allocated for taxes to his own account and made late payments. There were also unpaid taxes and a significant fine from the tax office for not providing information on time. I mentioned the issue to the business owner, who responded by saying that he believed he was a good person. However, he also expressed a willingness to discuss the matter with me. Following a conversation with the accountant, it was determined that we could not continue working together. Although the accountant made an effort to provide all of the company's documents, only the legal ones were ultimately delivered to the new accountant. Subsequently, it was discovered that some documents were still missing. The new accountant began with a salary that was 40% lower than the previous accountant. They regularly performed bookkeeping duties.

I was using a 15-year-old commercial vehicle of the company. However, within two months, the vehicle cost about half of its value in maintenance. Although we initially planned to cover the maintenance costs, we did not anticipate the extent of the expenses. The company did not have the budget to purchase a new vehicle. However, it had high creditworthiness as it had never used credit before. I secured a vehicle loan with favorable conditions and purchased a new off-road vehicle. Despite later accusations of indebting the company by the owner, the sound financing decision was clearly justified due to increasing inflation and rising vehicle prices.

Two donkeys named Kadife and Carlos were the center of attention at the NVO. They had been adopted after their owners emigrated abroad and left them behind. For many of the children and parents present, it was their first-time seeing donkeys. The children were surprised and very happy when they fed the animals. I have created a camping journal that serves as a memory book for children to write down their thoughts and experiences about the activities they participate in during camp.

I was concerned about some of the exaggerated behaviors I witnessed from the mothers around me. Although I am not a psychologist or an educator, I am someone who pays a lot of attention to what we should pay attention to when raising our children and how our words and behaviors affect our children. My understanding of responsibility in this context is based on the child's ability to acquire age-appropriate responsibilities rather than constantly being protected and having everything done for them. The behavior of the mothers during the camp, which was described as helicopter parenting, reinforced my desire to go camping without parents. Two examples should suffice to illustrate my point. In the first example, which involved a camp for 12-year-old girls and their mothers, we planned to pick oranges

from a tree, eat them ourselves, and feed Carlos and Kadife, who love oranges. We all picked oranges together and began peeling them with our not-so-sharp little penknives. One of the mothers mentioned that she had never given her daughter a knife and that she would cut the oranges herself. Before we suggested that she try cutting the orange herself, she had already finished cutting it. However, when her daughter attempted to peel the orange, she took it away, saying, 'Let me do it.' As a result, the girl was unable to feed the donkeys. In my second example, we planned to explore the surroundings and walk to the beach with our 15-year-old male campers and their families. Upon arriving at the ancient city of Olympos, we scheduled a meeting between the campers and an archaeologist from the excavation group. Meanwhile, the families enjoyed a day at the beach. One of the mothers expressed interest in joining us and I thought she was interested in archaeology. When the same mother came and sorted her son's fish while 7 adolescents were eating at a table at the same time, I realized that she didn't want to leave her son so that nothing would happen to him in the ancient city.



Figure.1, Youth indoor games.



Figure.2, Traditional woodblock printing workshop.

I volunteered for the Ulupinar Environmental Protection Development and Management Cooperative, which focuses on protecting *Caretta Caretta* sea turtles and endangered sand lilies on the Çıralı-Olympos coast. They made presentations on biodiversity and conservation efforts during our camps. I was supporting them as a volunteer in translation, reporting, and preparing sustainability projects.



Figure.3, Carpentry workshop.

Our second year started with a weekend camp for young children, taking advantage of the mild spring months of the region. It was quite surprising and demoralizing for me that the owner of the kindergarten, with whom I thought we got along well in the beginning, later denied most of the things we had agreed on (even though they were in writing) by saying ‘I deal with children at the kindergarten, I am child-smart.’ I was very uncomfortable with the way she treated the children in the camp, including her own daughter. She always wanted her own way and didn't give anyone the opportunity to do anything. When I heard the parents saying, ‘This place is very nice, can we come outside the camp?’ and the teachers saying, ‘Let's bring our other students, too.’ After she told me, ‘If anyone who is currently in the camp comes again, you have to pay me a commission.’ I realized that his real intention was only to make money and that she had no care about children and nature. I sent a agreement text with all the necessary details, but a woman objected to every issue and did not pay the agreed amount. This behavior was very upsetting. She also continued to be hostile by sending messages to the social media accounts of the people involved in the activities I announced, asking them not to participate in the NVO activities. During a joint camp with an entrepreneur, I was warned that camping was not recommended by her due to messages received. I promptly informed the sender of the messages that I would sue her for damaging my business reputation if she continued. Thankfully, the messages stopped. Despite many good memories at NVO, this still leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

While trying to remember all this, I realized that I started this initiative in the summer of 2020. It was the beginning of a period that lasted more than two years when the bans started due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We could never predict what awaited us, and no one could move due to the bans. However,

I believe that the reason I did not consider it a challenge is because we spent the pandemic times in nature and consumed clean, natural foods. Most of the feedback we received was that attendees were able to alleviate the stress caused by the pandemic and feel liberated once again after a prolonged period. My biggest success indicator was being able to socialize and enjoy it in an environment where everyone refrained from touching each other, imposed many restrictive rules, and tried to stay away from each other. Umut's experience was a striking example of this. Umut's mother informed us that her son is very concerned about the pandemic restrictions. He reminded her to follow the cleaning guidelines, particularly regarding masks, gloves, and social distancing. They also brought additional cleaning supplies to sanitize their rooms. On the last day of the camp, during the games we played, Umut hugged his teammates tightly. His mom was surprised by how close he was to other people, especially in this pandemic environment. It made me wonder if our social needs sometimes override our sensitivities. COVID-19 undoubtedly had a negative impact on our work process. However, the growing significance of places like NVO, which blend with nature and provide an immersive experience, reinforces why I embarked on this adventure.

In May of that year, we had to cancel all our events due to the pandemic. May is the most suitable time for all kinds of natural activities in Olympos. The cancellations, forced by the measures taken within the scope of COVID-19, caused financial losses.

In June and July, we experienced some restlessness due to the owner's delay in repairing the structural problems on the property. However, we eventually accepted his offer to solve the issues. He had been neglecting the repairs and disregarding the presence of our guests and camps. We were delighted when he purchased about 20 goats, as it provided an opportunity for the children to interact with them and made the facility livelier. However, the goats began to roam freely around the facility and even on the solar panels, reflecting the owner's neglect. The owner had installed at least 30 vertical iron bars before one of the camps, despite my warning that small children might come to the camp and get hurt. He was content with placing a flowerpot on the edges. Fortunately, one of the parents who came to the camp warned me about this, and I asked the owner to remove the bars. I could at least point out that someone other than me was picking it up. However, I couldn't bring myself to tell him to pick it up immediately. I have thought about this a lot. It might be because I'm a woman and he's a man, or it might be because I don't want to cause trouble, or it might be because I respect what he does and I don't get the same respect, or it might be because he owns the place. I am not sure if it is because of my gender or because I do not want to cause any trouble. I believe it is because I do not want to cause any trouble. However, I am not someone who shies away from a challenge or is afraid to engage in a debate. In fact, I am often more responsive than most individuals. I was becoming less tolerant of events like these. After COVID-19 restrictions, my son started high school in Antalya province, which is 80 km from Olympos. This meant that I had to travel constantly. All this started to make me think that I couldn't do this job anymore. Just at this time, the owner came up with the offer that he could run the facility himself in case he quit the job, and I could continue with the camp organizations. This solution made perfect sense. I wanted to focus my energy on improving the content of the camps to be organized and reaching more people. We had three camps scheduled until November, two of which were already fully booked. During the meeting about the camps, he stated that providing three meals a day was not feasible and that the camps were sold at a low price, which would not be cost effective. Then he stated that he did not want any more children's camps. Despite my explanation that the prices were reasonable for the business and that I could manage the entire operation during the camp, I recognized that the camps would not be held and must cancel all.

During this period, I gave an interview for Antalya Face Magazine and had a promotional video produced (Show Turk, 2021; Yasa, 2021). Although the social media account has been slightly changed later, traces of our business period can still be found (NVO, 2024).

Conclusion

At first glance, my experiences are like those of individuals who feel content in their comfort zone but desire to step out of it and embark on new adventures. As a woman in a developing country, starting a new business to pursue my dreams was quite challenging. I was aware of this before embarking on this adventure, and I was prepared for the challenge. At the end of this journey, I feel exhausted but proud and content. Prior to conceiving this article, I perceived this adventure as incomplete. The completion and dissemination of this article also signifies my readiness for the next journey.

I aim to share my experiences in this process to guide women who are considering taking similar steps but lack the courage to do so. By sharing my experiences, I hope to demonstrate that this path can be challenging but rewarding. Additionally, I believe it is crucial to highlight the skills I have acquired through my master's degree. I was unable to continue this journey, which I enjoyed greatly, and which taught me many valuable lessons, due to the need to maintain a work-life balance. Although this situation initially seemed unfortunate, it ultimately helped me to evolve in new ways. My motivation and goals for starting this business have not changed, but my approach has. I have begun academic studies on sustainability in order to deepen my understanding and share my knowledge with others. The aim of this text is to showcase sustainable approaches, cultures, and practices across various dimensions. It is often observed that people are comfortable with sustainability being limited to the environmental dimension but become apprehensive when it is applied to economic and management dimensions. However, sustainability begins with the human being, and more precisely with the behaviors of the human being in this direction. The minor actions individuals take in their daily lives, while not a quick solution to global issues, can contribute to a better environment in the near future. During the voluntary seminars I conduct on this topic, I have observed that the small measures we implement in women's lives have a significant impact. Sustainability studies and sustainable development goals provide analytical methods. However, adopting the principles of this subject in a digestible way makes it easier to implement these goals in both individual and corporate life.

Sustainable entrepreneurship is a response to criticism of entrepreneurship, which is often accused of causing environmental degradation and social inequality in for-profit businesses (Muñoz and Cohen, 2018). The concept of sustainable entrepreneurship is based on the idea that entrepreneurs should not harm the ecological and social environments in which they operate while pursuing opportunities (Kanashiro et al., 2020). The perception that entrepreneurs are ruthless rent-seekers, while sustainability advocates are dreamers far from reality, is changing. Entrepreneurship and sustainability can coexist and, in fact, complement each other well. Both require an adventurous and long-term journey. There are many reasons to embark on this journey and few to turn back. During the journey, you may find yourself alone or with very few companions. At each stop, you may come to realize how much you have matured, but also how tired and worn out you feel.

Being a woman entrepreneur in Turkey is not easy due to social pressure and difficulties in obtaining initial investment. Women face more obstacles than men in this regard, which can prevent them from starting a business despite having a solid business plan. Women entrepreneurs can achieve satisfaction in their family life by creating a healthy work-life balance. This can be achieved by freely making and implementing decisions at work while fulfilling family responsibilities flexibly. Such freedom can also contribute to achieving organizational goals and business development. Therefore, it is important to implement various incentive programs to support the ideas and creations of women entrepreneurs. A developing country cannot move forward with a mentality that expects women to stay at home, clean, and look after children instead of working.

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No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.

Author Contributions

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Ethics approval

In the writing process of the study titled “**An autoethnographic case for social entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism**”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the authors of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data. “Journal Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER] and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, and all responsibility belongs to the authors and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

Institutional review board (IRB) approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this research is not required.

Data Availability Statement

Anonymized data from this study can be made available on request from iduzguncinar@gmail.com.